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Hydrabad, the Strangler; OR, Alethe, the Child of the Cord.

A Tale of Jungle and Bungalow Life.

BY DR. J. H. ROBINSON,
AUTHOR OF "PATHAWAY," "NIGHTSHADE," ETC.

CHAPTER I. THE SILENT DEATH.

THE day had been sultry; but as it neared its close, soft and grateful zephyrs breathed balmily through the luxuriant Indian scenery. Earth

and air seemed dreaming together. The murmurs of leaves were whispered thoughts, and the rippling of running waters half revived memories of the past. The nodding flowers fainted and languished in their own perfumes; the long grass drooped dreamily in the voluptuous atmosphere. The birds ceased to sing, soothed and content with the mere pleasure of mute existence. Even the deadly serpent lay harmless in its coil, robbed for a time of its malice by the all-conquering sweetness of the most delicious climate in the world.

At this pleasing hour, when Nature herself sympathized with her creations, pulsing her own mysterious life into all animate things, a maiden, more beautiful than graceful palm or bending acacia, moved slowly from the trellised

veranda of a bamboo cottage to the sheltering canopy of a patriarchal banyan tree, beneath whose spreading arms she seated herself, on the folds of an Indian shawl.

She was a young English girl, of eighteen years, with an exquisite form, and a face to love at first sight. Her skin was whiter than the transparent muslin she wore, or the large pearls that encircled her neck and arms and hung in silvery loops from her dark hair, after the fashion of the natives. Her teeth, seen through her crimson lips, were like drifted snow. Her eyes were large, her face oval and faultless in every feature.

Her expression, as she reclined in the shade of the banyan, was serene and thoughtful. She had brought with her a book, but



SUDDENLY THE CORD SHOT FROM HIS HAND, AND THE NOOSE WAS DESCENDING WITH UNERRING PRECISION OVER THE FAIREST HEAD IN INDIA, WHEN THAT PITIFUL ARM WAS ARRESTED, AND A RETRIBUTIVE HAND GRASPED THE MURDEROUS AND MALIGN BEING BY THE THROAT.

the falling twilight blurred the pages; and she put it aside, and abandoned herself to the gentle influences of the hour.

What the English beauty thought of, who may tell? Who shall guess the fancies that floated through her pretty head? Perhaps her consciousness was of earth; possibly of a celestial region in the clouds. Whatever were her reflections, it is certain that she presented a most pleasing picture to the eye, which well might be pardoned for returning again and again to the delightful contemplation.

Sometimes her eyes rested pensively upon the foliage at her feet; sometimes they wandered dreamily upward through the thick branches of the trees to fleecy little islands in the clouds; and sometimes the long, silken lashes closed languidly, shutting out everything but the flowing shapes and images in her own brain.

On her right was the bamboo cottage, peeping from a mass of foliage, scented with the odor of the Indian rose, and relieved by the flowing leaves of the scarlet sagittaria; while at her left the tamarind, palm, and the banyan, growing in serried columns, stretched down to the banks of the Jumna River—forming long and shady avenues, not only picturesque to the sight, but most grateful in the tropical heats.

In one of these natural arcades, a nearly naked figure had been lying for the last hour. This half-nude body pertained to and comprised the personality of one of those nomadic natives of India, whose lives, habits, religion, and manner of subsistence, are alike a terror and a mystery.

While he lay nestled in the long grass, he occasionally lifted himself upon his knees and looked toward the bamboo cottage with an earnestness that evinced no ordinary purpose.

In critically observing his swarthy face, the eyes would first be noticed; not only for their great size, but for the darting brilliancy of the pupil, and the extraordinary quantity of white that surrounded the iris. His features were large, but not irregular; strongly marked, and, in repose, not repulsive. As he raised his head and gazed steadily at the veranda, his parted lips revealed teeth of singular whiteness; they were long, too, and sharp, reminding one of a carnivorous animal. As he appeared then, his mouth was a hungry mouth; his teeth, ravenous teeth; his nose, a nose to scent his victim afar off; his eyes, crafty and pitiless eyes; and his hands, the claws of a beast, to clutch and to rend.

He wore loose trousers, fastened at the waist by a leathern belt. A strip of red cloth was passed over his right shoulder and tied in a knot under his left arm, which was all he wore, from his waist upward. His feet were shod with sandals. A narrow band of white cloth around his head, kept his long, black, coarse hair from falling over his face. A stout cord was coiled about his body, just above the leathern belt, and secured by a knot.

This strange being might have been thirty-five years of age.

When he perceived the English girl issuing from the bungalow and approaching the banyan, his sooty features worked with excitement. A wild gleam illuminated his eyes. When she had seated herself, he began to crawl toward her. His windings resembled those of the wily serpent that glides through grass and foliage unseen and unheard. No sound gave warning of his approach. By and by, he reached the banyan-tree, and rising, stood, screened by its trunk, on the opposite side of which reclined the unconscious maiden, whose appearance we have imperfectly described.

Standing erect in the mellow twilight, his brawny figure was not unlike a statue of bronze. With a gliding motion of the hands, he unknotted the cord at his waist, and with singular dexterity made a noose at one end. He moved quietly around the tree until the whole person of the beautiful young Englishwoman was in view. With the cord in his right hand, and a dark and terrible smile upon his lips, he gazed at the rare vision before him. Changes swept over his face as he looked; but in the whirl of varied emotions there was not one softening flash of pity. His lips parted more and more, showing the sharp, hungry teeth; his nostrils dilated; his eyes darted fiery glances; his chest rose and fell responsive to the fluctuations of

his dark spirit, and the great muscles of his arms swelled and quivered.

Suddenly the cord shot from his hand, and the noose was descending with unerring precision over the fairest head in India, when that pitiless arm was arrested, and a retributive hand grasped the murderous and malign being by the throat. The cord fell to the ground, and a fierce struggle instantly followed.

The lady, not knowing what had happened, and taken entirely by surprise, sprang to her feet, and beheld the violent but brief contest with terror and amazement.

The native, being very athletic and agile, soon managed to slip away from his assailant, who was a young man, wearing the uniform of a British officer. The native, though at liberty, instead of disappearing in the jungle, ran a few yards and stopped; crossing his arms moodily on his chest, he eyed the man who had thwarted his fiendish purpose with searching and sullen curiosity.

"What has happened?" cried the lady. "What is the meaning of this?"

The officer pointed to the cord that was lying on the ground, at the foot of the tree. She seemed at once to comprehend the frightful nature of the danger she had escaped. She grew whiter than a lily; she pressed her hand upon her heart to still its startled throbbings. For a moment, darkness filmed her eyes; her limbs trembled; her breath came and went in gasps. Presently, the dimness and dizziness swept from sense and sight. Lifting her gaze, she saw the half-nude native, his broad breast still agitated, his supple limbs aquiver, and an evil smile on his lips.

The cord at her feet, the visage, and expression of the native, with the circumstance of his silent approach, combined to give her a perfect apprehension of his design.

"A Thug!" she murmured, pale with horror.

"A Thug!" repeated the officer, looking from her to the native, with a perceptible shiver. He felt for a pistol at his belt; it was not there—it had fallen from his person during the struggle; and he now perceived, to his dismay, that the native held it in his hand.

The officer glanced at the beautiful girl with a troubled countenance. The Thug's darting orbs glittered triumphantly.

"Leave us! You are not safe," said the young man, in a low and warning voice. "He is armed!"

"Fear not!" said the Thug, disdainfully. "I am the servant of the Cord; what it will not do, I leave undone. I deal little with fire and steel."

The young Englishwoman remained riveted to the spot. There was a fearful fascination in his restless eyes. His parted lips and white teeth reminded her of tales she had heard of ghouls and vampyres.

"Begone, wretch!" cried the officer, in a tone of loathing and indignation.

"I go," answered the Thug, "at no man's bidding!"

"Why have you sought my life?" asked the lady, overcoming her natural repugnance to addressing one whose purpose was so direful.

"I make no choice!" replied the Thug, a smile like dark lightning flitting over his malevolent mouth. "I am the Child of the Cord, and the slave of the Silent Death."

The lady shuddered.

"I am one of the appointed destroyers of mankind," he added, in a voice noticeably clear and resonant. "I glide here and there, with the soft step of the prowling panther. Like an arrow, I go where I am sped."

"Go, then," said the young man, "and pollute this place no longer with your presence."

"Call not down on your head the curse of the Strangers!" returned the Thug, menacingly.

"Where dwell the Strangers?" inquired the officer.

"In every part of India. They wait at your tables; they sit at your feet. They build mud cottages; they till the ground; they deal in merchandise; they do all things that others do. Sit down in your bungalow; walk among the trees; smoke your pipe beneath the shade of the palm; repose on your couch at noonday; yet the Cord and the Silent Death are ever near. Where dwells the Strangler? Here, there, everywhere! In the bamboo cottage; in the mud hut; in the great houses of the English, and in the tents of the wandering Parsee."

The Thug paused, glanced at the two before him, enjoying both their surprise and horror. Advancing, he recovered the cord, which he coiled around him as before, being careful the while to keep the pistol turned toward the officer.

"We shall meet again," he added, slowly moving to the avenue of trees; then pointing the pistol upward, discharged all its barrels rapidly. Casting the empty weapon upon the ground, the native darted into the jungle and disappeared.

CHAPTER II.

BARNABAS HUTTON.

While the fair young Englishwoman and the officer stood looking at the place where the Strangler had disappeared, a military, middle-aged gentleman issued from the cottage, and approached them. He had a rotund body, a rosy face, and twinkling, good-natured eyes.

He reached the parties without being seen by them. He stood a few seconds without speaking, quite at a loss to account for their silence. Obtaining, presently, a view of the young man's face, he addressed him with much warmth.

"Lieutenant Kavanagh, I am delighted to see you! How goes the rebellion? What news from the army? What brings you here? How came you tête-à-tête with my ward? Know her, I s'pose? Ida Macgregor! Fine piece of womanhood! Like an old fool, I'm fond of her. Love her about as well as I do Melicent. Why don't you speak, Sir? What the deuce do you mean, Sir? Can't you do anything but stare at the girl? She isn't to eat nor to drink, Sir!"

"Major Rainbold," answered the young officer, blushing, "you overwhelm me with questions, any or all of which I would willingly answer, if proposed one at a time. If this lady be your ward, I assure you it was quite unknown to me; having found her under circumstances that admitted of none of the formalities of etiquette."

"Formalities, Sir! Blast me!" he laid his hand on the hilt of his sword, "I'll have all the formalities at my bungalow that were ever thought of!"

Turning his regards upon Ida Macgregor, he observed her extreme pallidness.

"What has occurred?" he added, instantly, with changed manner. "Bad news from Cawnpoor? Sepoys coming?"

"First," replied the officer, "introduce me to your ward."

"Certainly! Miss Macgregor; permit me to present to you one of my army-friends, Lieutenant Neal Kavanagh, as brave a young fellow as ever mounted a breach."

"My dear guardian," said Miss Macgregor, "he has already proved his courage. I am indebted to his friendly arm for what life is left in me."

"There seems enough of it left to make your cheeks red, girl. Oh, you're both doing it!" said the Major, remarking that their faces were suffused.

"I have had a visit," said Miss Macgregor, with a shudder, "from one of those execrable creatures called 'Thugs' or 'Strangers'."

Major Rainbold's ruby countenance grew a shade less glowing. He instinctively looked at the young woman's neck, to see if the mark of a cord were on it.

"His dreadful purpose was thwarted at the last moment by the timely interposition of your friend," she added.

"I hope," cried the Major, grasping Kavanagh's hand and shaking it cordially, "that you shot the wretch?"

"Unfortunately, I had not the opportunity. He escaped," answered Kavanagh.

"It is greatly to be regretted! I should like to have the hanging of this terrible sect, which, it is said, infests the entire country. But how goes the rebellion?"

The Major gallantly proffered his arm to his ward, who looked faint, and needful of support.

"The rebellion," replied the Lieutenant, "goes badly enough. The country is thoroughly aroused. But few Sepoys remain faithful to us; and, I say it with sorrow, there is no place of safety for English residents in India. My visit here is partly for the purpose of giving you timely warning, and partly on account of a slight wound which I received two days ago, in an engagement

near Cawnpoor. If you know of any place of security, it is your duty, Major Rainbold, to seek it without delay. The most horrible barbarities are being daily practiced. Women and children excite no pity in the hearts of these monsters. Revolting cruelties are hourly perpetrated."

Ida trembled on her guardian's arm.

"These dreadful tales have too often reached me, even in this seclusion. I wish I could buckle on my sword, and hasten to the aid of our gallant countrymen; but my wounds are not yet healed, and that is not the worst of it; I cannot leave my girls unprotected. Heaven knows," added the Major, with emotion, "where I shall find a place to hide them from the fury of these raging demons!"

"I have seen," said Kavanagh, in a suppressed voice, the wives and daughters of our gallant officers hacked to pieces in the streets, as if they were of no more consideration than beasts of prey. Neither youth, beauty, nor innocence have power to soften the hearts of the Rebels. The mutinous Sepoys are the most cruel of all."

While they were conversing, they walked slowly around the open area, in the centre of which stood the patriarchal banyan-tree. Major Rainbold was pondering on what he had heard, when he descried a man, mounted on an enormous elephant, approaching from one of the long and shady avenues running to the river, and immediately called attention to the same.

"Be not alarmed," said Kavanagh. "This is an eccentric friend of mine—an American—with whose oddities I am sure you will be entertained. I had quite forgotten him, having left him a short distance back, to search for your residence on foot. Growing impatient at my long absence, he has followed, doubtless, at a venture. His style of traveling is as unique as his character. Here he is!"

The man on the elephant now advanced to the banyan-tree; and Kavanagh, stepping forward, said:

"Allow me to introduce to you Mr. Barnabas Hutton, an enterprising gentleman from the United States of America. Major Rainbold and Miss Macgregor."

"How do you do, Mr. Hutton?" said the Major, cordially, endeavoring to reach high enough to grasp the hand held out to him by the new comer.

"I'm pluribus unum, thank ye! Never mind shakin'; shake arter I git down. How d'ye do, Miss Gregor? Hope you're pluribus unum, too?"

Before Barnabas Hutton alights, we will take a hurried survey of him and his elephant. He was dressed in the light and airy garb of a native, and, with his tanned face and hands, looked more like a Sepoy than an American. He had a pleasant, though not handsome countenance. His mouth and nose were large, his cheek-bones rather high, and his face, though thin, was not really sharp, save in its expression. His hair was long, and of a light brown. On his head he wore a military cap, with a pompon in it. He had a short and scattering beard, giving one the impression that the crop had been blighted by an untimely frost.

Barnabas Hutton was armed. He had pistols and a dagger in his belt, and a sword girt at his loins, and a long native lance in his hand.

The elephant was no less an object of remark than its owner. Its extraordinary size was sufficient to make it noticeable; not to mention the fancy-painting that appeared on his huge sides and haunches.

The American slipped down from the great animal, and seeing that the Major was contemplating it with much interest, immediately became eloquent in its praise.

"He's as knowin' as he is large," he said, with pride. "You may travel all over Ingy without findin' his mate. His name is Methuselah—called Methuselah on account of his age. He's lived some'at less nor two hundred year. Bought that elephant when I first come to this country. Wouldn't part with him for his weight in gold. He's a powerful consumer, but is strong according."

"A magnificent animal!" observed the Major.

"A portable gallery of the fine arts, too. Got all the gods and goddesses of the country painted on his starboard and larboard quarters, the 'Merican flag on his back, and the Brit-

ish lion and unicorn on his haunches. Has a fine effect on the native critters, this paintin' has. Think I'm a great lord, got up without regard to expense, and travelin' on my own account, carin' no more for rebellions than I do for the squabblin's of the little Hindoos that I see tumblin' about the mud-huts.

"I wonder how you can travel in times like these," said Miss Macgregor.

"Well, I have kept sort of close since the diffikilities with the Seboys broke out about the greased cartridges and things. You see I left my native shores to set up the business of nabob, ride on elephants, trade, speckerlate, make money, and finally marry a live Begum or queen—a kind of female which I understand is plenty in these parts."

"I heartily wish you sucess," said Ida, smiling.

"Bliged to ye, Ma'am, but I've 'bout give up the idea of takin' up with a Begum. The truth is, I've got my dander up! I'm goin' to jine the Englishers, and with this same sword, cut, hack, slash, gash, slay, and put to flight them almighty mean Seboys, who make no more of killin' a woman nor they do of eatin' biled rice. They don't. No!"

"Your resolution is a good one," said the Major, "and I have no doubt but you and Methuselah will acquit yourselves creditably."

"Well, I reckon we shall cut our bigness into em'; and that won't be a hole much smaller nor a four-story bungalow, with a veranda all round. When Methuselah and I come down on the treacherous critters, they'll think that a heathen temple on wheels is arter e'm!"

"This young lady," said Neal Kavanagh, "has just escaped a most imminent danger. She has been in peril from one of those Phansigars or Strangers, of whom we were recently talking. I had the happiness to reach this spot before the fatal cord had done its work."

"Bullets and bungalows!" exclaimed Barnabas. "I'd like to have Methuselah wind his trunk about twice round that critter's neck, and give it the giniwine corkscrew twist! What such a low, mean, sneakin' article o' human natur was set a runnin' for, is more'n I know. Weren't you peskily scared, Miss Griggory?"

Ida confessed that she was much terrified.

"You couldn't helped it more'n nothin'! A cord, you see, isn't jest the right kind of a thing to put round a gal's neck; leastways, I didn't use to think so when I went sparkin' in the United States of Ameriky, which is a thunderin' long ways from here at the present speakin'; and how I'm to get home with this dodrotted great pile of elephant, the Lord he only knows. But to return to the text, as the missionaries say, what come of the throttlin' cuss?"

"He effected his escape into the jungle," replied Kavanagh.

"Shouldn't wonder if I see the critter as I rid up through the trees. I met a swarthy half-naked chap, with a white rag round his head. He glared at me malicious, and showed the whites of his eyes and the ivory of his teeth in a way I don't care to see several times."

"It was the same!" said Kavanagh.

"If I'd a knowed it I'd put Methuselah on to him quicker'n a comet could switch its tail! Perhaps you don't know that this great lump of flesh is nigh about human, and understands every word I say to him? He does. Yes!"

"Is he docile?" asked Miss Macgregor, highly amused by the quaintness of Hutton.

"Do-cile. He couldn't be do-ciler?" Then turning to the elephant: "Methuselah, give me a boost!"

The colossal creature gently coiled his trunk around the Yankee, and, lifting him steadily, placed him on the top of his head.

"If I should say the word, he'd set you all up here in a twinklin'. If I's to tell him to throw you over that bungalow, or trample you under his feet, he'd do it cheerful. If I's to order him to pull up the trees, tear your house to bits, and play the deuce generally, he'd do it willin'."

"He would?"

"Yes."

"He must be a great comfort to you!" said the Major, dryly.

"A comfort, about the size of Juggernot", replied Barnabas, practically. "It's true, I can't take him within doors, but there's plen-

ty o' room for him outside. He loves me, this mass of flesh does. I'm his friend, companion, and providence. I can sleep o' nights atween his great feet in safety. Put me down, Methuselah, and show 'em what you'd do if I should be tackled."

The man spoke in his usual tone of voice, but the sagacious animal seemed to understand his meaning at once. He reached up his supple and potent arm, coiled it again about his master, and set him carefully between his feet; then, emitting a peculiar whistle, and assuming a menacing attitude, cut the air to the right and left with terrible strokes of his trunk.

Miss Macgregor retreated in alarm, and even the brave Rainbold was not ashamed to fall back a few paces.

"Don't be skittish, Miss; he never hurts gals, he don't. No; he's gentle as a lamb or fierce as a lion, as I will him to be. He knows his master, and that's more'n some human critters does."

By this time some of Major Rainbold's colored servants appeared; and Hutton, refusing to part with his favorite till he was properly taken care of, went away with them, followed by his dumb friend.

Major Rainbold and his ward returned to the house, accompanied by Kavanagh, each musing on the singular character of the American, as well as of that thrilling adventure which had preceded his coming, and which Ida Macgregor did not now desire to hear mentioned.

The young man walked by her side in a pleasing dream, alike vague and undefinable. A soft influence was upon him, flowing from the presence and person of Ida Macgregor. He feared to speak, lest the sound of his voice should dissolve the spell, and interrupt the bewildering current of his thoughts. He was far from comprehending that sweet magnetism that was upon him. For the first time in his life, woman assumed, in his estimation, the graces and characteristics of a superior being. When he reflected that it had been his fortune to snatch her from deadly peril, his heart swelled with grateful emotion. He was almost ready to bless the incident that offered him the privilege of doing her an important service. Not only the prestige of the lady charmed him, but her beauty, flashing suddenly upon him like a sun, nearly blinded him with its dazzling brilliancy. He moved beside her as one might enter a new world. The modest bungalow became a fairy bower, and all its surroundings were transformed by the new and strange enchantment that possessed him.

CHAPTER III.

OLD WINE, NECTAR, AND A DREAM.

Neal Kavanagh did not see Melicent Rainbold on the night of his arrival, but that young lady was informed by Ida Macgregor of the startling circumstance that had transpired. The curiosity of Melicent was excited. She was anxious to meet the hero of the adventure, and rallied her friend not a little on his appearance at the right moment. He might have come a minute too soon, or a minute too late; in either of which events the golden opportunity would have been lost, the romance destroyed, and Love left to awaken at his leisure. It was in this manner that she presented the case to Ida.

"What does this rescuer of maidens look like?" she asked, after a free exercise of her wit. He was a plain awkward youth the last time I saw him."

"Indeed, Melicent, I scarcely know how he looks," answered Ida, gravely; "I should think, however, that he is a straight, military-looking young gentleman, with considerable physical courage."

"Bah! who cares for physical courage! You may as well tell me that he has a good appetite," retorted Miss Rainbold, disdainfully.

"Physical courage," said Ida, with warmth, "is a magnificent thing! Let me know that a man is a coward, and I care to know no more of him."

"The brave deserve the fair. He is brave, and Ida Macgregor is fair! What a good thing logic is!"

Miss Rainbold tossed her head, and smiled in her own lofty manner.

Melicent Rainbold was a brunette beauty. Instead of being white as a pearl, she was of that mellow dark so captivating to the eye. She was like old wine, rich and rosy, with the true flavor of Mother Eve.

Ida Macgregor was the nectar of the gods, sweet and ineffable, with the aroma of love lingering about it. Both were perfect in their styles; but their styles were not alike. One was habitually imperious; the other naturally dignified, and lofty only in moments of excitement.

"Your logic," said Ida, good-humoredly, "is like your raillery—of little account. But, to return to the subject, I do believe this Neal Kavanagh has physical courage."

"Ida," replied Melicent, somewhat piqued; "I care not a straw for physical courage! Dogs have courage, haven't they? The revolted Sepoys fight, don't they, and die? I want to know what description of face he has. But I lose time in asking you. Alethe!" She turned abruptly to a native girl, who was seated on a cushion at her feet; "you saw this hero after he entered the house. Tell me immediately what he is like."

The girl turned upon her mistress a face such as one may not often find, even in India. Her eyes were so large and melting, her mouth so exquisite, her teeth so incomparable, her forehead so perfectly molded, her hair so rich and luxurious, her shoulders so round, her neck so arched, her limbs so perfect, that it was a pleasure to look at her. If Ida were nectar, and Melicent old wine, Alethe was an intoxicating dream. She seemed a creature floating in a sea of tenderness, drifted to and fro by soft and caressing billows of passion.

"Did you speak, my mistress?"

She spoke in the liquid tones that love itself might choose for utterance.

"Who but I should speak! What was he like, houri?"

Both the ladies looked at Alethe. Perhaps each secretly asked if she were as fair.

"As graceful as the bamboo, as straight as the palm, with an eye like a tiger's," answered Alethe.

"There!" said Melicent, laughing. "That is more like a description. But it is not enough. Go on, dreamer."

"His countenance is regular and firm; his eyebrows dark as the hair of a negress; his lips red and human; a dimple in his chin—"

"In Heaven's name, leave out the dimple!" interposed Melicent, impatiently.

"A soft suffusion of the cheeks," resumed Alethe.

"Pshaw! That is for a woman," interrupted Melicent.

"What is good for a woman is good for a man, especially about the face, which may be beautiful without any reproach to his manhood."

"Beautiful is the wrong word, you foolish child! It may do for a melting thing like you; but not for an Englishwoman. Give me another turn. Choose your words better."

Miss Rainbold, despite her assumed indifference, was in reality far more interested than if Alethe had employed words usually applied to masculine attractiveness.

The maid knew the mistress.

"We have reached his cheeks," added Alethe. "Well, they are not much darker than yours. I think his forehead is whiter than yours."

"Ida, bring me a rod! This girl needs chastisement."

"Whiter than yours, my mistress," continued Alethe. "When he smiles, you forget that he has another expression. When he frowns, you forget that he has smiled. When he sighs, you would think that Love had come, and that he was dissolving in its delicious pain."

"Will you stop!" exclaimed Melicent, stamping her foot, and blushing.

"When his features are in repose, you would imagine that quietude had assumed personality. When he is pensive, you would swear that sweet Sadness had come."

Alethe rolled her voluptuous eyes upon her mistress. The Dream and the Old Wine seemed to affect each other.

"You forget the difference between Indian and English blood," said Melicent, contemptuously.

"All blood is the same blood; it is composed of the same elements. Woman differs not from woman; but her manifestation is not the same."

"Stop, parrot! I will not be taught by a dreamy girl. You are a fool!"

"Yes, my mistress; all maidens are fools; they were born to be fools. She who is not a fool, is not what she was born to be."

Alethe sighed, and looked at her own small feet.

"Miss Macgregor, why don't you say something? Is this tawny creature wise or otherwise?"

Ida looked at Alethe, then placidly shutting her eyes, answered:

"The girl is wiser than you or I. You call her your slave; but much I doubt if she has not a wider empire than you or your father's ward."

"That has the flavor of truth, which is a miserable thing. Alethe, poison yourself within a few days!"

"When my mistress bids me," answered Alethe, meekly.

"Ida, we gain nothing from this girl. She makes a most dangerous trinity. She should be sent away, or disfigured by disease. There is, you know, one glory of the sun, one glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars. Some like one glory, others another. And yet," added Miss Rainbold, with a haughty curl of the lips, "we are Englishwomen! Is it not enough to be an Englishwoman?" She paused. "I will tell you what we will do, Miss Macgregor. We will test the shrewdness and gallantry of this Neal Kavanagh. Tomorrow morning, after breakfast, we will saunter from the bungalow, without word or sign, or intimation, and stroll with all our careless graces down the avenue of palms, toward the river, and see if he will know enough to follow. This melting creature shall go with us, to carry our fans and our shawls, and our books, perchance, and above all—"

Melicent laid a white finger on Ida's arm:

"To look out for Thugs, and note the high bearing of unexpected heroes."

"Or, possibly," retorted Ida, with a quiet raising of the eyebrows, "the coming of Raynor Bracegirdle; the young gentleman destined alike to fill your dreams and your heart."

"Miss Macgregor, you are becoming odious. You had better retire to your own apartment. This room is now too large for Alethe and me. Good night!"

Melicent kissed her hand to Ida, and surrendered herself to the gentle hands of Alethe.

CHAPTER IV.

THE TIGER.

Miss Rainbold and Miss Macgregor, attended by Alethe, repaired to the jungle, as had been previously arranged by the former somewhat fanciful young lady.

Warned by the incident of the evening before, Hafiz, a native youth of fifteen, was instructed by Melicent to keep within sight and call, and advise them of the approach of any one not pertaining to the family.

Walking beneath a canopy of foliage, the conversation turned upon Kavanagh, and the American and his elephant; while Alethe followed silently.

Ida, it was observable, was not inclined to discourse freely of the Lieutenant, although he was the very subject from which Melicent expected to derive entertainment. The latter declared that he was not so handsome as she had been led to believe by the unreliable and provoking Alethe. In short, she intimated that she was disappointed in his appearance; and were it not for the danger that continually menaced them from the Rebels, his presence would not be very desirable. That she insinuated more than she meant, the quiet manner of Miss Macgregor sufficiently indicated.

"I am too indolent to walk further," said Melicent; "Alethe, spread the shawls."

The shawls were placed, the young ladies became seated beneath a palm-tree, and the girl, reclining gracefully before them, moved the air lazily with a large fan of peacock's feathers. For a time they abandoned themselves to the drowsy influence of the fragrant tropical atmosphere.

"Keep your large eyes open," sighed Melicent, playfully, "for Strangers and young English officers."

"I beg of you, my friend, not to jest on that shocking subject. The face of that assassin has haunted my sleep," said Ida, shivering at the fearful remembrance.

"If it really pains you, I will desist," replied Melicent, with more seriousness.

At that moment Alethe laid down the fan.

"Languishing creature," said her mistress, petulantly, "your mere existence makes you happy. I cannot bear people who are made happy by simply living."

"What is the matter?" asked Ida, looking at Alethe, whose countenance had suddenly changed.

Melicent, partially aroused from her languor by this question, glanced at the girl, whose cheeks were now pale, whose lips were parted, and whose eyes were glassed with fear. Alethe did not speak. She kept her dilated eyes fixed on a certain point, which was in a direction directly behind her mistress, and on an angle that carried the focus some twenty yards distant.

Melicent and Ida followed the suggestive gaze of the girl, and beheld an object calculated to inspire the wildest feeling of terror. A superb tiger was crouched on the ground, at the distance we have mentioned, gently beating the rank grass with his tail. His mouth was partially open, displaying a portion of his red tongue and sweltering lips. Although he was looking at the group, his mood was quiet, and his eyes did not dart those fiery glances that he shoots forth when angry. He was a marvel of beauty and strength. As he lay there, lolling like a dog, Ida Macgregor, despite her fears, was struck and fascinated by the symmetry of his shape and the majesty of his mien. She gazed at him in a transport of admiration and terror. In the madness of both these emotions, she was tempted to arise, approach the magnificent creature, and lay her hand on his princely head.

Melicent, perceiving the danger, grew white as snow; and, with her face set in a rigid and stony stare, gradually swayed toward Ida, until her person found support upon her bosom.

Alethe, who had first discovered the glossy haired scourge of India, was slowly recovering her self-possession. Her chest swelled, and her form trembled like one suddenly resuscitated from death.

"Do not move," she whispered. "Keep your eyes fixed on the eyes of the tiger! Catch his gaze, and you can hold him there, if you are firm."

"I have not nerve enough!" gasped Ida. "Melicent! Melicent! You are strong and imperious; meet this royal beast with your royal gaze."

Melicent's head moved with a negative motion, but her blanched lips were mute.

"He stirs! he stirs!" murmured Alethe warningly.

"The dreadful beast looks at you. I cannot seize upon his eyes," said Ida, faintly.

"Speak not! I have him! I will hold him back till help come," whispered Alethe.

Ida looked at the girl, then at the tiger. An expression of curiosity seemed to rest on the brow of the lordly creature, he saw something in the melting eyes of Alethe that exercised a strong influence on his fierce nature. He was fascinated, awed. Alethe held him in magnetic chains that his great limbs could not rend asunder. He ceased to lash the ground with his tail, which now lay upon the grass, as if its proud owner was in doubt whether to display fear, anger, or uncertainty.

Ida beheld this mute conflict of eyes with trembling suspense, not daring to move a limb or utter a sound; either might break the spell.

As for Melicent, she scarcely breathed; yet saw, sensed, heard everything. The nearness and imminency of the peril had paralyzed her.

"How long is this to continue?" Ida mentally queried. "How long before the mighty animal will shake off the shackles of the human will, and tear us?"

She glanced toward the bungalow for hope and help. No one was in sight. Not a friendly familiar form greeted her vision. The ordeal was every moment growing more painful. She scarcely dared to turn her regards again upon Alethe; she feared to see her shrinking and withering under the burning gaze of the beast, like a frail leaf in the scorching sun. But the girl was calmer, stronger, and more sublime in her strange strength. Her glorious eyes seemed starry furnaces, melting the ferocity of the beast.

Melicent shivered; a spasmodic thrill passed over her that Ida could feel. A faint red flush appeared, too, on her cheeks. Ida remarked a singular intensity in her hitherto fixed and glassy eyes—a sudden lighting up of the pupils, as if the power of sight had been instantaneously restored after a period of blindness.

Ida, looking over her left shoulder, following the direction of her thrilling gaze, beheld the straight firm figure of Neal Kavanagh nearer the tiger than herself or companions.

He had wound a sash around his left arm, and held in his right hand a long sharp Malay dagger. His face was pale, but resolute.

Ida's heart nearly stopped beating. She unselfishly forgot personal peril; from the instant of the discovery of Kavanagh, she thought of him only. She held her breath in anticipation of a shocking spectacle. Now that her eyes were on the young officer and the tiger, she could not withdraw them. She felt Melicent clinging to her, and her hot breath on her face; she was glowing with a new and more concentrated life called out of her stony trance and inspired by the presence of Kavanagh.

Ida gave him a look of earnest entreaty. He comprehended her, smiled faintly, and made a negative motion of the head. This calmness was surprising.

The tiger grew uneasy. He scented Kavanagh, and, with a warning growl, lifted himself upon his feet. A slight rustling of the leaves had admonished him of the nearness of the Lieutenant, and broken Alethe's spell. The royal beast had now different eyes to deal with; eyes cool, stern, unflinching, and threatening.

Ida wished for unconsciousness, temporary abeyance of life—oblivion, blindness—anything to shut out the scene.

The crisis approached. The tiger softly and slowly settled upon his fore-feet; his tail waved in the air like a hostile banner; his lithe body undulated with impatience; his eyes glowed like spheres of fire, while his open mouth displayed white rows of cruel teeth and a tongue red as blood.

Ida saw him rise with a bound and shoot through the air; she saw Kavanagh spring aside, and the gleam of steel; but after that, for a few seconds, neither man nor beast were distinguishable. There was a whirl and roll, an eddy, a vortex, a whirl of motion in the grass; then presently, when her eyes were nearly sightless with suspense and terror, Kavanagh arose, panting and bloody, with the Malay dagger in his hand.

The tiger was stretched on the ground—its great limbs trembling in the tremors of death and its glorious eyes glassing over. Kavanagh gazed at his royal foe a moment, glanced at Ida, tottered, and fell beside the expiring tiger.

CHAPTER V.

HYDRABAD.

Neal Kavanagh had no sooner fallen than Barnabas Hutton appeared at the spot, riding his elephant. He was not a little astonished at seeing so many pale faces, nor was his surprise diminished when Methuselah, with an angry whistle, rushed to the scene of the encounter, and seizing the tiger in his trunk, held him aloft in air.

Perceiving soon that the tiger did not struggle, he tossed him into the jungle with an indignant cry, and turned his attention to Kavanagh, who was lying quite still.

It was then that the noble animal displayed that intelligence which has rendered its species famous in every country where it is known.

He lifted the Lieutenant carefully. The arm of woman could not have encircled him more gently. He set him upon his feet, and seeing that he could not immediately maintain his footing, made a mournful noise.

The friendly offices of the elephant were not in vain; the motion started his blood and restored his consciousness. Grasping the trusty trunk of the animal, he soon managed to support himself; which encouraging symptom appeared to give Methuselah the liveliest pleasure.

In the interim, Miss Macgregor had arisen; and now, impelled by every instinct of her sex, advanced to the assistance of Neal Kavanagh. However benevolent her intentions, Methuselah could not so well judge of them as his master, and made a remonstrative movement as the young lady approached.

"None o' that, old boy!" exclaimed Barnabas, who had thought proper to maintain a strict silence during the foregoing act and ministrations of Methuselah. "That isn't the kind of animile as young English officers are afraid of. They'd sooner, a durn sight, run arter 'em than from 'em. Let her come, old chap, and I'll wager your trunk chock full of sweetmeats that she'll bring him

round quicker'n you can turn a sunset back'ards."

Barnabas slid down from his mountain of flesh; and Methuselah, without further ceremony, set Kavanagh between his great flapping ears, and would have soon placed the young lady beside him, had not his master interposed; his trunk being already around her waist.

"That never'll do," said Barnabas. A boy seven years old would know better'n that. How'd you s'pose he's goin' to stick on up there? Goin' to put the gal up to hold him on, wasn't ye? Meant well 'nough, I dessay, but Englishwomen is pertick'lar 'bout bein' boosted to the backs of elephants."

Methuselah fixed his twinkling eyes on his master; and relinquishing Ida, reached up and replaced the Lieutenant on his feet.

Meanwhile, Miss Rainbold and Alethe had arisen, and the latter came forward to offer assistance. The former had not recovered from her fright, but Kavanagh had assumed new interest in her sight. The very qualities she had affected to think lightly of had suddenly made him a hero in her esteem. She was about to ask if he was wounded, when Ida anticipated the question.

Neal Kavanagh, who was now supported by the American, answered with some difficulty, that he believed his arm was slightly injured. Barnabas, who was very quick and handy in all cases of emergency, unwound the sash from Neal's arm, and made himself acquainted with the nature of his wounds.

"You may call this ere a slight injury," he said, with a knowing shake of the head; "but in the country where I come from, the doctors would call this arm a chewed up consarn."

"Let him be taken to the house at once," said Ida; "he bleeds frightfully! What shall we do for a surgeon?"

"Doctors are plaguey scarce hereabouts," replied Barnabas, "but where I come from every other house has a doctor in't. The fact is, they have so many that they're sick nigh on to all the time. Both male and female buys a notomy and a book when they've turned fifteen, and arter that practises doctor's stuff on their own account. Don't know as I should left Ameriky if there hadn't been sich a stannin' army of botanist eclectics, homopaths, and mineral pisoners. If we only had a dose o' marcurey to give this scger-boy, I rather think 'twould fetch him round arter a spell o' sickness. It would. Yes!"

Melicent was about making an impatient reply, when a gentleman on horseback, guided by a native, reached the spot. It was Raynor Bracegirdle—the person referred to by Miss Macgregor, in a bantering way, on the previous night, and, as it was generally understood or surmised, the prospective husband of Major Rainbold's daughter. Be this as it may, his arrival, so far as his personal vanity was concerned, was at an inauspicious moment—Neal Kavanagh being really the hero of the hour, the centre of thought and attention.

Melicent greeted him hurriedly and coldly, barely troubling herself to inform him what had happened, with her eyes on the sufferer the while, giving orders that could not be obeyed, asking questions that could not be answered, and making suggestions utterly impracticable.

Mr. Bracegirdle was not flattered by his reception. Dismounting, he threw his bridle to a servant, and taking a position where he could see what was transpiring, looked moodily on.

Hafiz, who had kept conveniently out of the way when wanted, crept up to him and entertained him with a detailed account of the affair; and ended by pointing to the body of the tiger. Bracegirdle felt more uncomfortable than before. In plain sight was a handsome English officer, who had actually slain a tiger with a dagger! This was a splendid achievement; an exploit almost unheard of in the history of tiger-hunting. This marvel was performed under the very eyes of Beauty. Miss Rainbold witnessed it; Miss Macgregor witnessed it, and that dreamy creature of the large eyes witnessed it. The splendid brute was killed in their defence. The lucky officer had done just what a young gentleman should do to commence a love-affair romantically—periled his own life; destroyed a beast that ought not to have been destroyed with a dagger; and

lastly, saved the pretty trembling creature from being torn in pieces. The more Mr. Bracegirdle thought of it, the less he liked it.

Meanwhile, the native who had guided him to the Major's bungalow joined the circle around Kavanagh, and, for a space, looked on with seeming indifference. By and by, he approached Kavanagh, and began to examine his wounded arm. Hutton beheld this action with some displeasure.

"Go 'long, Hindu, go 'long!" he said. "You know a durned sight more about greased cartridges than you do about tiger-bites, or boar-bites, or lion-bites, or snake-bites, or any other bites you can mention."

"Sahib," answered the native, quietly, "I know something concerning wounds."

"Are you a doctor?" asked Melicent, eagerly.

"Lady," he replied, respectfully, "God has given me the knowledge of healing herbs and life-giving drugs. His name be praised!"

Attracted by the sound of his voice, Miss Macgregor now turned and looked at his features, which, though very dark, were regular, and not destitute of a certain kind of dignity. His deportment was unassuming and deferential. When he replied to Melicent's query, he bent his body, and did not lift his eyes to her face.

"Hindu," interposed Barnabas, "confine yourself mostly to the airth, where those same roots and yerbs grow; and not let your fancy fly off to a region where, in my opinion, they're mostly strangers to ye. You native critters a'n't apt to be over an' above pious; so, if you know anything, tackle the chewed arm at onct."

The native quietly surveyed the American from head to foot; then turned, undisturbed, to the examination of the arm.

"You may look on't, and feel on't, Hindu, and scowl on't, if you want to," continued Barnabas, "but it'll have to be sawed off at the second j'int, as true as you're a heathen! It will. Yes!"

Ida glanced quickly at Barnabas's grave face.

"You certainly cannot mean it, Mr. Hutton!" she said. Then to the native: "If you have any skill, Sir, exercise it as quickly as may be; for, as you see, Mr. Kavanagh is losing much blood."

"Lady, I am your slave," answered the native, with a profound obeisance.

"Native," said Barnabas, touching the Doctor's shoulder, "before you commence potterin' round the boy, tell us your name."

The man did not notice the touch nor the question, but hastily seizing the sash which lay on the ground beside him, wound it about the bleeding arm with great dexterity.

"Perhaps you didn't hear me?" added Barnabas.

The native kept at his work.

"Methuselah," said Barnabas, looking into the twinkling eyes of the elephant, who had not changed his position since his friendly efforts in behalf of the sufferer; "here's a native that's lost his tongue. Show him your'n!"

The Yankee tapped the animal lightly on his nether jaw, and he opened a mouth that was enormous.

The native fastened the sash and arose, unconscious, seemingly, that the American had addressed him. Ida came to the aid of Barnabas:

"Friend," she said, in a winning voice, "names are convenient; besides, they are sometimes better than letters of introduction."

"Lady," he answered, humbly, "I am called Hydrabad; but it is not an illustrious name. I have practiced my art among my native hills, and am little known out of them. I am what I am; and who can be more? I am Hydrabad and thy slave."

As the native ceased speaking, his eyes fell upon Alethe, who was contemplating him earnestly. He averted his gaze hastily; and for an instant his serenity was disturbed.

"Sahib," he turned to Hutton, "let the wounded man be carried at once to the bungalow."

"It's the most sensible thing you've said, Doctor Hydrabad," replied Barnabas.

"Give me a toss, Methuselah, and then put up the boy right gingerly, and I'll hold him safe. Carefully, old boy, carefully! Handle him as you would an egg. That's it! Keep a stiff upper lip, Lieutenant. You've done some'at to-day that'll make you famous as long as you live. It isn't every lad as can

kill a tiger with a dagger. It's a rotted sight better than a slap at them Seboys. If you want to go into the business of tiger-killin', I'd like to jine you as a silent partner."

Kavanagh laughed, and followed with his eyes the figure of Miss Macgregor, who, attended by Bracegirdle and Melicent, was moving toward the house, where he, anon, through the good offices of Methuselah, arrived, to the great surprise of Major Rainbold, who had been sleeping during the whole affair. Being an eminently practical man, he quickly had Neal Kavanagh properly provided for, and Hydrabad was permitted to dress his wound, which he did with gentleness and dexterity, and to the relief of the patient, who, being philosophical, did not much regret what had happened. Passively submitting himself to Hydrabad, of whose fitness or skill he knew little and cared less, he sought and found an inward balm in the thought that Ida Macgregor had twice been saved by his hand.

CHAPTER VI

THE DEADLY DROP.

If Raynor Bracegirdle had visited Major Rainbold's residence in the expectation of delightful love-scenes and tête-à-têtes with Melicent, he was bitterly disappointed. That young lady had never manifested a very marked preference for him; yet it had been agreed upon tacitly, perhaps, by the provident fathers, that she was to unite her fortunes with his. The pair had often met, although their interviews had not of late been frequent.

For a few days he strolled about the grounds with the Major, and amused himself as well as he could, trusting that the coy fair one would, in due time, treat him with less indifference. But this desirable change did not come. While he hourly grew more enamored, she, apparently, grew more cold and haughty.

Raynor Bracegirdle began to feel a burning jealousy of Neal Kavanagh. The latter was unknown to him. Their first meeting was in the jungle, where the tiger had been slain; a meeting which he inwardly cursed the remembrance of. Cordially, he wished this military young gentleman in the society of a personage so universally obnoxious to mankind, that we will not name him. He grew morbid on the subject. He made wild conjectures, then turned those conjectures into realities: a cheap way of making one's self miserable. Raynor Bracegirdle soon believed everything that jealousy could suggest. It may be safely affirmed that the devil took possession of Raynor Bracegirdle. Never were the fiercer and darker elements of his nature so aroused.

At the end of three days, it was his fixed idea that Kavanagh was his rival, and would bear off in triumph the woman he loved.

Bracegirdle had passed nearly all his life in India. His father had been a government official, rolled up a fortune, and retired to a comfortable quietude, to live out his appointed days luxuriously. Raynor had free access to the paternal purse, had his own way, was violent in temper and imperious in disposition, beat the native servants, managed to get into all kinds of difficulties, and sowed bad wild oats generally. But Bracegirdle, senior, was a nabob; and Bracegirdle, junior, the son of a nabob.

Now, it is not to be supposed that the son of a nabob was going to stand any nonsense about his love-affairs. He never doubted but he was entitled to success; nor did it occur to him at the time of his arrival, that any one would be so presumptuous as to dispute with him, the hand of any lady he might fancy. But, as he had brought himself to think, Neal Kavanagh had thrust himself between Melicent and his pretensions. One thing was true beyond cavil; a handsome young officer was in Major Rainbold's household, receiving the kindest attentions of the ladies. Had there been no more, this simple fact was sufficient to excite his jealousy and hatred.

To succeed with Melicent, the removal of Kavanagh he believed indispensable. How could Kavanagh be removed? He smoked out many of the Major's best cigars while deciding this point; and ended by throwing himself in the way of the native, Hydrabad, who had acted as his guide through the jungle on the morning of his coming, and whose services were retained by the Lieutenant.

He had attempted more than once to study the character of Hydrabad, but with unsatisfactory results. He now resolved to subject him to a searching analysis.

Hydrabad was walking among the palm-trees, his eyes fixed upon the earth, his dark lips moving at intervals. His garb was of rich material, and picturesque. The turban that crowned his brown brow was of white muslin, ornamented with golden embroidery. The contrast between the bronze skin and white fabric was marked. His flowing trowsers of dark green silk were fastened near the ankle by a silver cord. His ankles and the portions of his feet left exposed by the sandals were covered by wrought buskins of morocco. The upper part of his person was clad in a loose and not ungraceful garment of the same color as his trowsers, falling nearly to the knee, and secured at the waist by a leather girdle, tastefully embossed, and buckled in front with a silver buckle. In this girdle was thrust a creese, with a handle of mother-of-pearl, surmounted by a moonstone of extraordinary transparency.

Lying on his dark throat, attached to a curious silken cord passing around his neck, was a flaming carbuncle, which, at a little distance, looked like a spot of blood. Such was the outward state of Hydrabad.

Raynor Bracegirdle considered in what manner he should address him, admiring his sinewy figure as he walked to and fro.

"Hydrabad," said Raynor, "why do you walk and mutter?"

Hydrabad stopped, and looking at the questioner, answered:

"Young Englishman, why do you sometimes walk and mutter?"

"When you are questioned, Hydrabad, you should answer, and not question again," added Raynor, coldly. "When I walk, I scarcely know whether I mutter or not; but if such be the case, it cannot be from content."

"Why, then, do you question me? If you know how to judge of men's actions, what need of wasting breath in vain words? What is it you would say to me?"

Hydrabad, contrary to his usual custom, lifted his eyes to a level with Raynor's. They were large eyes, with large whites and long black lashes; while the pupils were restless and bright. Bracegirdle searched his brain vainly for the key to those mysterious orbs.

"What is there that I should say to one of your degree?" he replied. "And yet there was something I would have proposed when I first saw you walking here."

"I knew there was!" said Hydrabad.

"Do you pretend to supernatural power?" asked Raynor, with covert contempt.

"It is the impostor that pretends," responded the native. "I pretend to nothing. There are matters that you would talk of; now is your hour."

Hydrabad drew his creese from his girdle, and gazed at the moonstone in the handle.

"What see you in the moonstone?" sneered Bracegirdle.

"No matter!" answered Hydrabad, sullenly. "I see what you wot not of."

Hydrabad turned on his heel to move away.

"Not yet," said Bracegirdle. "How is your patient, and how prospers quackery?"

"Both prosper," retorted Hydrabad, with a disdainful glance, "as well as your wooing!"

"Fellow," exclaimed Raynor, "you presume somewhat on your relations with this family, and my good-nature. Know, tawny slave, that I am of a choleric temper; and my hand, ere now, has been as quick as my wrath. Your dark race swarms my father's house; and, if a yellow face now and then disappears, who is the wiser for it?"

The countenance of Hydrabad underwent a change sudden and startling. For an instant his eyes shot vengeful glances at Bracegirdle. The sense of a great wrong seemed resting upon him. But the glow of anger, malice, a consciousness of injustice, or whatever it might be, passed as quickly as it came.

"The Europeans are our masters," he said, gloomily.

"How long before Kavanagh will recover?" asked Raynor.

"Whenever it is the will of God!" replied the native.

"Look you, Hydrabad! Do such wounds ever prove fatal?"

Bracegirdle tried to speak carelessly, but was not so much an adept in dissimulation as to deceive the person he was addressing.

"The tooth of a tiger is by many esteemed poisonous," answered Hydrabad, looking downward.

A bright red flush leaped to Bracegirdle's cheeks.

"Did the teeth sink deeply into the flesh?" he demanded.

"So deeply that they met, and the bones were splintered."

Bracegirdle drew nearer to Hydrabad. He assumed a different tone and manner.

"Would it be strange," he asked; "would it be an unheard-of thing; would it be a matter to be talked of, or inquired into, if this young man's arm should become dreadfully inflamed and swollen, and ultimate in gangrene and death?"

Hydrabad was silent. He appeared to muse. He answered, presently:

"All this might be, and no suspicion be aroused."

"Suspicion!" said Bracegirdle, quickly, almost angrily. "Who spoke of suspicion? Why should there be suspicion?"

"Of foul play; of secret practices," returned Hydrabad, quietly.

"Dare you speak thus to me, fellow?" Would you implicate me in such a thought?"

"I dare, and do! For this purpose you sought me. You came to offer many rupees for the removal of the handsome European," answered Hydrabad, in a voice perfectly unmoved.

Bracegirdle, though annoyed and alarmed at the sagacity of the native, prudently checked the hasty denial that rose to his lips, and, reflecting a moment, said:

"If I had such a purpose, I'll warrant that Hydrabad, the native doctor, is the person to fulfill it. There is a prophecy of cunning and evil in your face."

"Talk on, Englishman! My feelings are not so tender that you will wound them. The diversion of a few ounces of blood from a given channel, and the stopping of the pulsations of a large red muscle, are to me things of little consequence. I care not who dies, if so be I but live myself. There are too many people on the earth. I would they were reduced to one half, or one fourth, or even one eighth of their present number. It would then be a world worth living in."

Hydrabad's face grew animated, and his smile was cold and deadly.

Raynor drew back. The air was chillier, he thought.

"Hydrabad," he said, "you should be of that accursed people called Phansigars or Strangers!"

The native's hands moved uneasily; first to the silken cord around his neck, then to the leathern girdle about his loins. Raynor could see the muscles of his arms quivering against the silken sleeves that covered them.

"Yes, Hydrabad, you should have been a Thug!"

"You," retorted Hydrabad, scornfully, "would never have had courage to be a Child of the Cord! You may be able to strike down a slave with your dagger, when the law is all on your side; but put danger before you, and secrecy of purpose long to be persisted in, death and execration to be dared, and your arm would have no more strength in it than a broken reed."

"Keep your opinions till I ask for them!" said Bracegirdle, haughtily. "It is not long, he added, since Miss Macgregor came near being strangled by one of that horrible race; and it was the fortune of this same Neal Kavanagh to snatch her from fate. But he left his work half done, pride himself on it as he may: he did not kill the wretch. Had I been in his place, I would have slain the vampire, even had I to rend him with teeth and hands, and drag his heart with unarmed fingers from his vile body!"

"Be not too sure of that," answered Hydrabad, scowling. "His muscles are firmer than yours, and his courage none can doubt; while, in the art of love, he stands pre-eminently above you."

The wily native pronounced these words in a manner most likely to be offensive to his auditor; and did not err in his judgment.

"It were not safe to beard me thus, if I did not need you!" exclaimed Bracegirdle. Walk down toward the river, under the palm-trees, that I may not be seen talking with you, and we will settle the number of the rupees."

"I care not who sees us; and as for rupees, I am not greatly in want of them. I will do your work, however, if you pay well and cross not my mood."

He placed his back against the trunk of the janyan-tree, under which this conversation had taken place; and, crossing his arms over his breast, looked moodily toward the river, whose murmuring waters could be heard. Much was passing in the dark mind of Hydrabad.

"I know not whether you may be safely trusted, but I do know that if you deal falsely with me, the pistol or the dagger shall be your reward. I care not," he continued, speaking low and rapidly, "that this man should actually die; that is, if there be any other method of getting him out of my path. As he now is, he is my misery and my curse. The woman I love has, for his sake, forgotten me. She treats me with coldness, scorn, indifference. If he were removed, my lost position might be regained. I say nothing of death—mark that!"

Hydrabad shrugged his shoulders, and darted a glance of contempt at the speaker.

"Take him from my sight, my hearing, from here," resumed Bracegirdle, with bitter earnestness; "and I will give you a thousand rupees. But notice this: there is to be no distrust, no lurking doubt, no breath of suspicion, no thought, near or remote, that I am in any manner concerned or implicated in what happens."

"I understand," said Hydrabad, icily; "the girl must not think you a murderer. You would not pay a thousand rupees to be thought a murderer. It is plain and reasonable. Listen! I know an herb so potent, that if but a drop of the juice of the green leaf be dropped into a wound it will inoculate the whole system with death."

"Will it be sudden?" asked Raynor, under his breath.

"No," answered Hydrabad. "Were I to strangle you with a cord, that would be sudden; for in three minutes you would be dead; but he who is three days in dying, dies not suddenly."

"Is the secret of this herb much known?"

Raynor glanced anxiously at the native.

"Only to a few learned native doctors, and they care not to communicate a knowledge so dangerous. But there are a thousand ways of ending what every one is desirous of continuing. Nothing is so brittle as that thing called life. One may die of a kiss. An odor may kill; a puncture of the skin may kill. A thought may kill like a sword."

Hydrabad paused, then said, by and by: "Yet for all these methods and devices I care not; neither for fire and steel."

Again his fingers sought the cord about his neck, and trifled with it nervously.

Bracegirdle could not comprehend him.

"Remain with me no longer," said Hydrabad. "Give me a hundred rupees, as a pledge of your good faith. There is no bargain without something to bind it. If I do it not well, pay me no more; and you shall be judge whether I do it well or no."

Bracegirdle gave him money; and, with a guilty consciousness at his heart, hurried from the spot.

CHAPTER VII.

THE INDIAN VIOLIN—A SECRET JOURNEY.

Alethe, from the time of the coming of Hydrabad, lost no opportunity of observing him. There was that about him which excited distrust and dislike. His embarrassment on first seeing her was not forgotten. Persuaded that he was there by no accident and for no good, all his movements were closely looked to; and when she could not herself watch him, Hafiz was kept faithfully dogging him; for he was naturally shrewd, and endowed with the subtlety of his race. He discharged the part assigned him to the great acceptance of Alethe, receiving from her not only thanks but rupees.

So well did the girl conceal her distrust and disguise her repugnance of Hydrabad, that the latter not only ceased to be confused in her presence, but began to feel much at ease, and favor her with tender glances. So far as silence and passivity could encourage, she encouraged him; and that was quite sufficient to lure him on to flatteries and protestations; all of which she heard demurely, artfully keeping her purpose out of sight.

Once she permitted him to find her alone in the garden. He brought with him an Indian violin, and after tuning it, played with much skill. He selected for a theme a wild

and passionate melody, making the instrument express all the emotions of the human mind. It wept and wailed; it prayed to Alethe. It was now soft and melting; it was now quick and vehement; and anon, sobbed with passion; love, poetry, and thrilling tenderness poured from the strings.

He stole nearer, his large eyes full of pathos. He tried to catch her gaze; but Alethe, wise in the arts of adepts, gave him no such advantage.

He sang—not words, but a succession of sounds, mellow and musical, and varied to express the different emotions that swept over him. Alethe allowed him to exhaust his tender fury without interruption.

"You sing and play well, no doubt; but you are a teacher," she said, with composure.

Hydrabad frowned a little, and cast the instrument from him.

"Is this the answer you make, maiden," he asked. "Is it thus that you reply to Hydrabad?"

"Have I not praised your skill? Is it not enough? Do you hold my judgment in such slight esteem that my commendations go for nothing?" replied Alethe.

"Love, fair maiden, is not satisfied with such meagre return. It wants sigh for sigh, and sentiment for sentiment." Hydrabad sighed, and looked at the girl's small feet with his devouring eyes.

"Hydrabad—if your name be Hydrabad," answered Alethe, with spirit; "spare your music and your voice for more appreciative ears. To me it is naught. Let your presumption cease here. I am not of your kind. You are to me as the wild boar with tusks, or as the sharp-toothed ghoul that sucks blood from the throat. Keep your distance, Sir Hydrabad! If you do not, I have a little dagger under my bodice that shall teach you respect."

Hydrabad was at first amazed, and showed his disappointment; but before she had done speaking, he was as calm as ever.

"It was but a jest, disdainful maiden," he said, with more of humility. "I was exhibiting my skill and not my sentiments. I will be careful to give you no further cause of complaint."

"See that you keep your word," answered Alethe, springing into the verandah. Could she have glanced over her shoulder, and seen the expression on the yellow visage of Hydrabad, with all her courage and cunning she would have trembled. He clenched his hands, set his long teeth together, and glared after the vanishing form of the girl.

It was immediately after this scene that Raynor Bracegirdle found him walking and muttering among the trees, in a mood for any evil-doing that might offer. About fifteen minutes after that strange conference, Alethe left the bungalow, attired for a journey, and walked swiftly toward the bamboo huts of the native servants, of whom Major Rainbold kept quite a number. As she passed along, she saw Barnabas Hutton amusing himself with some of the native children. She at once approached him.

"American," she said, in her musical voice, "can you keep a secret? Can I trust you?"

"If I can't, Brownie, it's because I can't git one to keep. Jest produce a few of 'em, and see if I don't fasten to 'em like a dog to a root. Trust me? Well now, I allow if Barnabas Hutton, of the United States of Ameriky, can't be trusted, there's nobody in Ingy that can! You 'pear pesky queer 'bout somethin'. Speak up, Brownie, and tell me all about it."

"Mr. Hutton," answered Alethe, promptly and firmly, "it is necessary that I should make a journey, between this and morning, of many English miles. I wish to make such haste, that my absence shall not be remarked by any. My errand is most important and pressing. I look to you for assistance and secrecy."

"You're a handsome gal, and a well-behaved, and I don't mind sayin' that I'm at your saryice. I ain't, perhaps, a lady's man so much as some, but I'll be dodrotted if I don't like the pretty dears. You're in ainst and that's a fact. I see the real grit in them splendid eyes. Now, Brownie, give me the word o' command, and I'm right about face, eyes right, hayfoot, strawfoot, in the qustin' of a biler!"

"Get your elephant, Mr. Hutton, and lead him yonder."

"In a twinklin', Miss. But I'd caution ye to have an eye on them 'tarnal Seboys, who wouldn't mind doin' ye a mischief; leastways, they wouldn't me."

"We'll keep clear of the Sepoys, Sahib," replied Alethe.

Barnabas started off with alacrity, and, anon, appeared at the designated spot with the elephant.

"Make him kneel," said the girl.

"He can clap his arm round your little waist and put you up as gently as you'd ever wish to be handled," answered the accommodating proprietor of the elephant.

"Make him kneel, Sahib!" repeated Alethe, impatiently.

"Lord bless you, yes! Down, old boy, down! There's a load goin' to git onto ye now, that'll be likely to give ye the rheumatics, I guess. Hope 'twon't stop your growth, by gracious! Up, little 'un, up. It's jest as easy as 'tis runnin' up the roof of a house. There you go, like a squirrel! Well, I'd no idee you's so spry, Brownie. These Hindu gals are surprisin' when they're on their muskle. Now settle yourself all right. Room enough, ain't there? I sometimes walk round when I get tired settin'. You might lay out two city house-lots and a garden up there, and have enough left for a driveway. Now you look comfortable. Want me to go, I s'pose?"

Alethe smiled, and said:

"Of course, Sahib!"

Barnabas Hutton sprang upon his favorite's back, the animal arose, and the girl indicated the direction. It was nearly dark; or, more properly, as dark as the Indian nights are wont to be, for the moon and the stars render them very soft and pleasant.

The enormous animal started off at a rolling, monotonous pace.

"This," said Alethe, "will never do. One might run faster. You must know, my friend, that we are on a business of life and death, and every moment's delay throws the balance into the wrong scale."

"You shall have it your own way, Miss," replied Hutton, in the best of humor; and speaking to the beast in those tones which long companionship had rendered him familiar with, he increased his speed in a very remarkable manner. Pursuing a road not much traveled, they swept over highland and lowland, passed wet jungle and dry, toward a long range of hills lying far in the distance before them.

As the night drew on and grew older, the way became more solitary and the path narrower. For long distances, the branches of gigantic trees formed a canopy over their heads. Sometimes flocks of parrots, disturbed by their approach, arose from the foliage and went whirring and screaming away.

"These, Brownie," said Barnabas, in a voice somewhat softened by the loneliness and peril of their situation, "are the favorite lurkin'-places of the infarnal leopard, tiger, and panther."

Alethe snuggled a little closer to her protector.

"Don't be afeared, Miss," he went on, "Methuselah is powerful strong in his trunk, and his intelligence is nigh on't to human. He's got a quick eye; you can seldom find a quicker. You see these great ears?" Barnabas tapped Methuselah's ears with his lance. "Now you may think them ears, a fallin' down in that way, stops his hearin'; but 'tisn't so. While you go along cozily on his back, s'posin' he's nothin' but a mountain of flesh, he's tendin' strictly to his business—throwin' his blinkin' eyes yender to that cluster o' bamboos; or yender, 'mong them mangoes; or to the left, 'mong them tamarinds; or to the right, 'mong the sauls; with his hearin' fakilities actyve all the while. Why does he do it? Acause he knows the country he lives in, and the dangers to be guarded agin'."

"Can you go a little faster, Sahib?"

"I can, but you must look out for the branches. We're travelin' right smart, now. An Arabian horse couldn't keep up with us. Is it much further, little gal?"

"It may be twenty English miles, I cannot tell. Are you afraid, Sahib?"

"No," answered the American, with more dignity than he had previously shown. "I belong to a nation that never stops to be afraid. But if it's no offence, and isn't changin' the subject too violent, I'd like to know

some at more o' this business? If it don't consarn that rascal, Hydrabad, I ain't so good at guessin' as I used to be. I ain't. No!"

Alethe knew well how to guard her secret, and did so. They swept swiftly on.

The great body of Methuselah went surging through the jungle, like an enormous billow racing over the sea before the wind.

Barnabas could not for the life of him help thinking of the pretty creature near him. His heart kept thumping against his ribs. Instead of regretting the journey, he rejoiced in it. Lions, tigers, leopards, and panthers anon passed out of his consciousness. He thought of Alethe. He wondered that he had never before been struck with the exceeding sweetness of her voice. He availed himself of the tremulous zodiacal light to steal glances at her face. It was pale as the zodiac itself, yet lovely still; while the large eyes were brighter than the tropical stars. He felt strangely, and, for the first time in his life, was at a loss for a subject of conversation.

They went far in silence, and finally, to the surprise of Barnabas, stopped at a mean-looking mud hut, at the foot of the range of hills mentioned, and near the wildest jungle that he had ever seen.

"This," he remarked, unable to conceal his disappointment, "beggin' your pardon, seems like comin' fur to a poor market."

"Be patient with me, good Sahib. If you judge hastily you will judge wrongly. I am not mistaken in the place. I remember the landmarks. Permit me to dismount, and await me at the door. If I call you, come to me, and do as I bid you."

The young girl spoke with a fervor and authoritativeness that harmonized with the natural gallantry of the American. He was ready to hazard his life for this fair flower of India. He caused the elephant to lie down, and lifted Alethe from his back. He held her an instant before he would allow her to go.

"I'm afeard," he said, in a kindly manner, "that you're goin' to a place that you don't feel certain about. Don't run too much risk, my pretty Brownie. If you don't feel sure of your ground, let me go in with you; and I swear to gosh, if any critter so much as looks impertinent at you, I'll crop his ears! I will. Yes!"

"You are very kind, Sahib; but no one will harm me."

She tripped to the door of the hut, smiling gratefully.

Barnabas followed her as far as he could with his elephant, then earnestly assured her, that if there was any trouble, Methuselah should scatter the hut with his trunk, and tread her enemies under his feet.

CHAPTER VIII.

MEERAB.

Alethe knocked, and was cautiously admitted, after waiting a short time.

The person who appeared was an old man, with a white beard, overhanging forehead, and deep-set eyes. His expression, at first, was both crafty and wary; but when he had taken a rapid survey of his visitor, his features settled into composure.

His dress was simple, being a loose brown robe reaching to his feet, with a very large turban of the same color. The interior of his bamboo hut was lighted by some blazing sticks on the hearth, which, to enable him better to see his visitor, he occasionally stirred.

She observed books in the little apartment, and packages of herbs. This was one of those learned men of India, who read Sanscrit, study the virtues of plants and the influences of the stars.

"Child," asked the Brahmin, when he had pointed her to a bamboo seat, "whence come you?"

"From a long distance, and my business is urgent," replied Alethe.

"Speak, daughter," said the Brahmin, putting more sticks on the fire.

"Great Meerab, you are acquainted with the poisonous and healing spirits that reside in plants. One of these spirits kills, and the other gives life."

The man appeared surprised at hearing his name pronounced, but anon made answer.

"By the blessing of Brama, I know somewhat of drugs, roots, and herbs. But what is that to you? You are but a child. Surely you can have no enemies?"

He looked inquisitively at her handsome face.

"Meerab," returned Alethe, "I come not to invoke the elements of death. There is no one whom I would destroy. I am here for another and better object."

"Go on," said Meerab.

"I wish for an antidote, or counter-agent, to a powerful poison," resumed the girl.

"Be less vague; tell me the nature of the poison."

The Brahmin stroked his white beard, and his eyes wandered over the lovely form of Alethe.

"It is of a spirit so subtle that a single drop of it dropped into a fresh wound will, in the space of two or three days, insidiously undermine the powers of life," she replied.

"Are you acquainted with this wonderful agent?" inquired the Brahmin, watching her countenance.

"Great Meerab," answered Alethe, with emphasis, "I know there is such a silent and deadly destroyer, and I have hastened to you for its antidote. I am not unprovided with the means of recompense. Here is a bag of rupees. Give me that for which I am come."

She placed the bag of rupees at his feet. Meerab eyed it curiously, then gazed attentively at Alethe, and sighed.

"Girl," he said, with some severity, "all knowledge is from Brama, and I sell not the secrets of Heaven for money."

"It is to save life, old man!" cried Alethe, vexed at his tardiness.

"The more reason that it should not be bartered like the common commodities of existence," returned Meerab.

"If it may not be sold, then give it me, at once; for I will not go hence without it!" said Alethe, resolutely.

The sunken eyes of Meerab began to show animation.

"The balm you crave is too precious for gift, save in rare instances, where the will of Heaven is plainly indicated."

He paused. Alethe's thrilling orbs were upon him. For an instant he felt himself revealed in her sight; but the change of his countenance was scarcely perceptible.

"Trifle not with my needs, old man! I know you, and the class to which you belong."

Meerab took from his person a wallet of skin containing opium, and taking therefrom a piece of the narcotic weighing five or six grains, was about to swallow it, when Alethe snatched it from him, together with the wallet.

He manifested undisguised astonishment at this singular action.

"Frown not, learned Meerab, that I take from you your enemy. You shall intoxicate your brain no more till you have attended to my request. I would save the life of one who has not lived a third of thy years; who is in life's pleasant summer, with its flowers and its sweets around him. He must live!"

She spoke with kindling enthusiasm. Her nature was being gradually aroused.

"Give me the wallet, child; it is all I have, and there is no more of the precious gum within a day's walk. It is my life, girl; I cannot exist a night without it. It is my inspiration—my religion! It fires my brain, and gives me glorious dreams of Brama."

He stretched forth a tremulous hand; but instead of restoring the wallet, Alethe placed it in her bosom. The Brahmin smiled, then scowled; the latter being the least deceitful of the two demonstrations.

"You might have purchased the antidote," he said, with a sneer.

"But not at your price, old viper!" cried Alethe, indignantly. "Tamper with me no more. Answer me; yes, or no?"

"No!" said Meerab, sullenly.

"Then adieu, wise Meerab, and pass a horrible night without opium. You have been full oft to Paradise; now go down to Hades, where the fire of torture is not quenched, and where the worm of desire dieth not."

Alethe made a step toward the door.

"Stay, girl!" exclaimed Meerab. "Stay! Leave me not to the horrors of Tartarus. Who is it that you would save?"

"One, young and brave," she replied.

"Is he an Englishman?" asked the Brahmin.

"He is."

"And an officer?"

"Yes."

"Then, let him die!" cried Meerab, shaking with rage. "Let them all die! It is

time that we were our own masters. The brave Sepoys are at work. Blood is flowing like water. Let it flow! I shall rejoice when the last death-rattle of the last oppressor is heard."

"You should have better thoughts. Be careful how you incite our deluded people to revolt and bloodshed. They are rushing upon destruction. May you perish with them!" answered Alethe, with less vehemence but equal earnestness.

"Young woman," said Meerab, becoming calmer, "your face grows familiar as I look at you. We have met, I know not where. Tell me your history. What English family are you the pet of? What impulse brings you hither, and puts you in the power of Meerab?"

"All these questions you may answer as you list. I will ask you one in turn. Do you know one Hydrabad, who pretends to something of your skill?"

Meerab stared, and demanded, quickly:

"What of Hydrabad?"

"Only this: That, to-morrow morning, I will have him hanged to the tallest palm-tree on the banks of the Jumna!"

The old man looked anxious.

"I doubt your power," he said, musingly.

"Ay, this is an invention of your own; but it shall not serve you. Give me the wallet, and go hence."

"I go; but I restore not your wallet, and Hydrabad dies! You vince, old man. The betrayer is sometimes betrayed."

"I believe you not," retorted Meerab, with a mocking laugh.

Alethe now noticed that there was a strange odor in the air—a kind of penetrating vapor that affected her brain. Simultaneously with the discovery of this phenomenon were its effects. The power of volition seemed suspended. She stood gasping and wondering, while Meerab crept toward her with a cord in his hand. The whole dreadful rith of his character and calling flashed through her staggering consciousness like lightning. Meerab was of the Strangers!

She saw the noose whirling through the air, without the ability to avoid it; it fell over her head; it tightened upon her neck like the fold of a serpent.

Her horror was stronger than the arts of the old man, and she screamed for Barnabas.

The bamboo door was shattered, and through the opening appeared Barnabas and the trunk of the elephant. The former seized Meerab by the throat and hurled him backward; he fell near Methuselah's feet. Barnabas, with flaming anger, tore the cord from Alethe's neck, and kept her from falling, with his strong arm.

"Give me air—more air, Sahib!" she murmured.

"Pull out the sticks there, Methuselah. Knock out one side of this devil's den."

Whether it was the motion that Barnabas made, or whether it was his voice that guided him, it was certain that he laid hold of the light bamboo structure, and rent away one side of it as if it had been composed of wisps of straw. The fresh air rushing in, dispelled the dangerous vapor and restored Alethe.

Meerab tried to arise: but as often as he made the attempt, Methuselah pushed him back with his ever-vigilant trunk; and finally, to give emphasis to his wishes, held one of his great feet menacingly over him.

"E pluribus!" exclaimed Barnabas, quite shocked at what had occurred. "If I'd been a minute or two later, you wouldn't been worth takin' back to the Major's. I reckon I'd better kill this old wretch. One o' them stranglin' devils, isn't he? There's a mark round your neck, by gracious!"

"Meerab," said Alethe, turning to the prostrate and trembling Brahmin, "you are unfit to live; yet give me that antidote, and you shall not be harmed. Refuse, and the Sahib will speak to his elephant, who will trample you beneath his feet. Make your election quickly."

"Death," muttered the Strangler, "can come but once."

"And that once will be soon!" said Barnabas. "Look at them tusks; how would you like to dangle on one of 'em like a herrin' on a stick? Give the gal what she wants, or say 'No', plump and strong, and die game; for as sure as there are stars in heaven, the beast shall throw you sky-high, catch you on his tusks, and your old bones shall break like eggshells under his feet."

"She shall have it!" groaned Meerab. "Permit me to arise, and I swear, by my gods, to give you the drug, with directions for its use."

Barnabas ordered Methuselah to stop, and he reluctantly obeyed. The old man arose, humbled, baffled, yet burning with inward hate and wrath.

"Swear to me, Sahib, that you will keep faith," he said, looking at Barnabas doubtfully.

"I will," replied Hutton, "if you keep faith with her."

"And if I deceive her?" queried Meerab.

"If you deceive her," answered Barnabas, sternly, "I will hunt you down as I would hunt a beast of prey, and strangle you with your own cord."

"Enough!"

He looked at Alethe. "Girl, it was not the will of the dark gods of death that you should perish to-night by my hand. In that wallet of skin which you took from me you will find a serpentine vial. That serpentine vial contains a priceless treasure—the antidote to various malignant poisons. No virus can be taken into the body, either by bite of serpent, or sting of insect, or by inoculation, that it will not counteract and destroy. Drop but one drop on the part where the poison was introduced, and the cure is certain. In cases of the bites of venomous serpents, the application must be speedy; in others, where the poison is less malignant, the urgency is not so great; although, in matters of life and death, haste is always desirable, be the destroying element slow or fast in action. Girl, Meerab has redeemed his promise."

Alethe drew the wallet from her bosom, and found the serpentine vial. It was full of a fluid that looked like melted diamonds, it was so clear and radiant. Securing the vial upon her person, she tossed the wallet to the old man, who immediately broke off a piece of the gum and swallowed it with avidity.

"Sahib," said Alethe, "let us return."

In a few moments, Methuselah was bearing them, with great swiftness, toward Major Rainbold's bungalow.

CHAPTER IX.

THE DROP OF DEATH AND THE DROP OF LIFE.

Neal Kavanagh awoke in the morrow following Alethe's secret journey, with a severe pain in his wounded arm. Since the first dressing by Hydrabad, he had suffered comparatively little; his applications having exerted a very soothing and healing influence. Major Rainbold came in to make his morning-visit, and observed, with surprise, a change in the young man's appearance. His face was flushed, and he tossed restlessly on his bed. Thinking the bandage might be too tightly drawn, he loosened it; but the relief was temporary.

"The arm is much swollen," said the Major, "and the fingers are puffed out like lumps of dough. I can't account for it; and, in fact, I can't account for anything that takes place in this house lately. I've lived many years in this country, and never was menaced by a Thug before, nor had a tiger enter my private grounds. But I s'pose strange things must happen occasionally. Then there are Melicent and Bracegirdle playing at some kind of cross-purpose that I can't understand. He seems a proper young fellow, but that handsome jade of mine treats him with the greatest coolness. He mopes round, muttering and looking as grim as a land-pirate; and my lady scarcely seems conscious of his existence. But you get attention, my lad, I must confess. It's a mighty fine thing to be bitten by a tiger, eh?"

Major Rainbold shrugged his shoulders and took a pinch of snuff. While he was sneezing, Melicent and Ida entered the chamber, attended by Alethe.

Neal Kavanagh for a moment forgot his pain. The presence of Ida Macgregor sufficed for a brief season to divert his mind from the new and strange symptoms that had appeared.

"Miss Rainbold," said Ida, "has thought lightly of physical courage till within a few days. She is now ready to appreciate any act of prowess, from the storming of a battery to the slaying of a tiger."

"Miss Macgregor, Mr. Kavanagh," retorted Melicent, coloring, "has been making

herself very disagreeable for the last few days; and if you are as potent with young ladies as with Thugs and tigers, I entreat you to subdue her malignancy, and make her a little more companionable."

"My powers, Miss Rainbold, are exceedingly limited, and I regret to say do not extend to so exalted a being as Miss Macgregor."

Having projected this terrific shell from the mortar of his brain, Kavanagh was reminded of his extreme earthliness by a dreadful twinge in his arm.

The Major thumped his snuff-box and laughed.

"That's what I call sharp shooting!" he exclaimed. "How, in Heaven's name, do you suppose the boy is going to get well, if you make such drafts on his ingenuity? Blast me, girl, if you draw his fire in that way, he won't have ammunition enough left to maintain the citadel of life three days!"

"Exalted being," said Melicent, turning to Ida with a toss of the head and a mocking smile, "it is yours to answer this very handsome thing from the Lieutenant."

"If you look closely at Mr. Kavanagh," replied Ida, approaching him, "you will see that his arm is giving him great uneasiness."

Alethe stepped forward very quickly, and looked at him. There was a visible change in her manner.

"Miss Ida is right," she said. "He is very ill."

"What do you know of illness, child!" interposed Melicent.

"I know enough, my Mistress, to perceive that the Sahib is in great danger, answered the girl, stepping still nearer the couch and adjusting the pillows. While doing this, and while the Major was again inspecting the arm and calling the attention of the young ladies to its swollen condition, she said to Kavanagh, in a low tone.

"You did not follow my instructions. Your arm has been dressed by Hydrabad since I last saw you."

"You are mistaken, my friend. To my knowledge, Hydrabad has not been in the room since you left me last night," replied Kavanagh. "But I have slept profoundly—unnaturally, I think."

"Ah! that accounts for it," said Alethe, quickly. "You have been under the influence of a drug, and a score of persons might have entered your chamber without waking you."

"Girl," said Melicent, "don't weary Mr. Kavanagh with your observations. It seems an effort for him to speak."

"His arm must be attended to," deposed the Major, bustling about. "Where is that humbug, Hydrabad? Ah! here he comes. Look here, you root-and-herb man? Your patient is bad enough. His arm's as large as a six-pound carronade. It's my notion that you're no doctor, Doctor Hydrabad! Bracegirdle, come in." The concluding words were addressed to Raynor, who, for some reason, had followed Hydrabad to Kavanagh's apartment. On seeing so many persons present, he was disconcerted, not knowing whether to advance or retreat. The Major's words decided him, and he came in, while Hydrabad advanced, with an air of mingled respect and confidence, to the bedside of his patient.

Alethe placed herself where she could watch the play of his features.

"A little fever has set in during the night," said he.

Kavanagh kept his eyes fixed steadily on those of the native. He saw what Ida Macgregor had more than once fancied she had seen—something familiar in that yellow visage. What was it? Ida had asked that question. Kavanagh now asked it. Was it the voice that so frequently startled him? Was it the eyes, or the teeth, or the mouth? He could not tell.

Ida stood at the foot of the bed, observing the countenances of each.

"The arm," added Hydrabad, "has imprudently been exposed to a cold draught of air, and you behold here the effects of the exposure."

Kavanagh suffered his gaze to wander for an instant to Alethe. There was doubt, fear, hope, and entreaty in the glance. Hydrabad was baring the arm, and did not see the mute language of this look; but it did not escape the penetration of Ida and the jealous watchfulness of Melicent.

The wound was frightfully inflamed. The

red flesh seemed ready to burst, while a green watery humor exuded from the imprints of the teeth. All save the Doctor beheld the arm with surprise and alarm. Whatever Bracegirdle was prepared to see, the reality surpassed the anticipation. Hydrabad, only, was calm and untroubled.

"Send for Barnabas Hutton," said Kavanagh.

"Sahib, there are too many present already. Your safety depends on perfect quiet," interposed Hydrabad.

Alethe waited to hear no more, but ran for Barnabas, and soon came back with him.

"Barnabas," said Kavanagh, faintly, "I shall never ride with you again on your elephant."

"Let every one leave the room but Alethe," said Barnabas, firmly and promptly. No one present had seen him display such decision and dignity.

"I await the command of the Sahib; I am his physician," said Hydrabad, with a slight depression of the brows.

"Go!" added Kavanagh; "to Barnabas I confide myself."

"Right about face, then," said the Major; "there is no virtue like quick obedience. Eyes to the door! march!"

Major Rainbold retreated, followed by Bracegirdle and the young ladies. Hydrabad was the last to leave the apartment; he strode away with the same unmoved countenance with which he had entered.

Barnabas closed the door the instant they were out of sight, and locked it.

"Now, gal," he said; "what's to be done must be done quick. If somethin' isn't done to that arm, it'll have to be cut off afore twelve hours! It looks to me, for all the world, as if it had been wounded by a pizen-ed arrer."

"Sahib," said Alethe, "this wound has been poisoned since I left you last night. One fatal drop has mingled with your blood, which, unless met by a powerful counter-agent, will surely result in death."

"I fear your announcement is but too true," answered Kavanagh. "That dark villain was unworthy of our confidence. I commend myself to Heaven!"

"Look at this, Sahib!" said Alethe, holding up the serpentine vial. "Last night it was more than forty English miles distant; this morning it was here. In this vial is life, hope, and love! In life there is all; without it, there is nothing."

She gazed in triumph at the sparkling liquid; then, with a steady hand, dropped into Kavanagh's wound one glowing, glistening drop. It fell, flashing like a molten diamond, and, hissing in the red flesh, disappeared like lightning.

"It burns like fire!" groaned Kavanagh. "It darts up my veins like splinters of steel!"

"It will save you!" murmured Alethe.

"Is there no doubt? Is your faith full and perfect?" gasped Kavanagh.

"It is! I have not a shadow of fear," answered Alethe, with singular confidence.

Barnabas whispered in her ear:

"'Lethe! 'Lethe! He may have deceived you."

"No, no! There is that within me that assures me beyond the pain of distrust. Do you not see that it affects him already?"

Kavanagh heaved a profound sigh. He felt relief from a terrible pressure. That nameless horror that had been drifting through his nerves for the last hour, fell powerless and dead, stricken down by a more potent element. His consciousness ebbed back from the gateway of death, toward which it had been tossing and rolling, like the billows of the unquiet sea.

Kavanagh stretched out his right hand; Alethe blushed and trembled, then, with a smile, pale and fluctuating as the light of the zodiac, placed the tips of her fingers in his palm. He tried to close his hand upon the quivering little members; but his strength was gone. He gave her one grateful look, that more than repaid her toil and danger, then his eyes closed with an irresistible languor, and the balmy influence of the ineffable elixir was fully upon him. He did not sleep, but swam deliciously to and fro, in a perfect state of rest, between sleeping and waking.

"Bruise these leaves, Mr. Barnabas," said Alethe, in a soft tone, after watching, with wonder and delight, the benign effects of the antidote.

Hutton bruised some leaves in a wooden mortar, and assisted the girl to bind them carefully upon the arm. This and other friendly offices she silently and gently performed. Kavanagh, though he could not see nor hear her, sensed her presence.

There was a soft tap at the door. Alethe answered it, and Ida Macgregor glided in, pale and anxious. His quiet features and nearly suspended respiration thrilled her, at first, with a terrible apprehension; but the passionless calm of Alethe's expression and the satisfied manner of Barnabas undeceived her.

Alethe placed a chair for her near the bed, which she accepted unaffectedly.

"He must not be left alone," said Alethe, in her liquid tones. "We must watch him by turns. Mr. Barnabas, let neither Hydrabad nor Bracegirdle enter this room."

"Lethe," replied Barnabas, earnestly, "when you speak, I forget that I have a will of my own."

Alethe smiled, and Barnabas posted himself at the door, with a heart so honest and so much in the service of Alethe and Kavanagh, that there was not money enough in India to corrupt it.

CHAPTER X.

THE SHIRT OF MAIL.

Kavanagh's tranquil state continued; fair and faithful watchers sat by his bedside; Barnabas Hutton stood guard over the entrance to the chamber; the Major walked restlessly in the veranda; while Melicent passed the dubious hours in her own room, or suffered the infliction of Bracegirdle's company below stairs. That gentleman made repeated attempts to divert her attention, and produce a favorable impression; but never with less success. He approached more than once the subject of his love; but only to be driven from it by her adroitness or indifference. Finally, rendered desperate, he accused her of heartlessness, and a design to trifle with his hopes and feelings.

Piqued by his charges, she wished to know by what right he questioned her conduct, or what reasons she had ever given him to expect more from her than friendship? Had she accepted him as a suitor, and if so, at what period; for she could not remember that the word "love" had passed between them. In future, she begged of him to confine his attentions to the ordinary courtesies of life, nor aspire to anything more. She was not a child to do a foolish thing because two pleasant old gentlemen wanted her to, or was willing that she should. That was her final answer, and he could go about his business.

This was the substance of a conversation which left Raynor Bracegirdle in a miserably angry, mortified, and dissatisfied state of mind. In this unamiable mood, he left the bungalow and walked about the grounds, where he had time to reflect on his position, which was anything but desirable. His sentiments toward Kavanagh had not changed; he still beheld in him a rival, and the author of his present unhappiness.

While in the young officer's room, and a witness of the suffering that he had himself produced, he experienced remorse; but since his interview with Melicent this weakness had passed. He was again Raynor Bracegirdle, the son of a nabob. In his anger and chagrin, he exulted in the dark deed of which he was the prime mover and author.

He stretched himself beneath a tamarind-tree, and looked toward the quarter of the native servants, momentarily expecting to see one coming to him with the news of Kavanagh's death. A consciousness that made him tremble, blazed through his brain. A miserable being called Hydrabad—a slave, a serf, a peon—held over him a secret, like a flaming sword! This creature might, at any time, prompted by malice or mischief, make an expose of his crime and its cause, and render him a criminal in the eyes of the law. This thought was not to be endured; it stung, it maddened him. He hated not only Kavanagh, but also Hydrabad, with a burning intensity of hate.

His education, his prejudices, his habits, his position, his wrath, each and all added to the haughty and contemptuous detestation which had suddenly grown within him for the willing tool he had employed to rid him of a supposed rival.

Without consideration; without that fore-

thought that pauses to reckon results; without that calm judgment that looks into futurity and deduces a prophecy of what is to come from the present, he hurried to the apartment which the hospitality of Rainbold had furnished him, and swallowed a large quantity of arrack, which inflamed his anger, deepened his humiliation, and whetted his appetite for revenge. He who has not learned restraint in childhood will not learn it in manhood.

Raynor Bracegirdle stalked from the now quiet bungalow, a desperate and reckless man. He wanted an object on which to wreak his vengeance. When he had walked some distance, he came suddenly upon the one he was thinking of—Hydrabad; reposing beneath a canopy of vines and palm-leaves. It was the opportunity he wanted. He was one of the lords of the soil; he had stricken such vermin before, but never with the incentive that now urged him on. It was but the drawing of a dagger—the raising of an arm—the striking of a blow—the flowing of a red fluid; that was all!

Raynor Bracegirdle could do that. The death of a tawny wretch would conceal the crime of a white Christian. So he approached Hydrabad without noise; so he stole up to Hydrabad without sound; so he stood over Hydrabad like a silent spectre.

He struck—as he had done before—and the dagger rebounded like an India-rubber ball; the weapon alighted upon a shirt of mail!

Hydrabad sprang to his feet, and laughed a bitter mocking laugh.

"Unfledged fool!" he exclaimed. "Did you imagine that one trained from infancy to the practice of cunning and the arts of subtlety could be cheated and surprised by a white-skinned European! Sahib, you are to me as milk to arrack; as water to inflammable spirit. I know you! How well I know you! My skin is yellow, and my religion to you is as the religion of hell; but I know you, nevertheless, O Sahib! I expected you would try the dagger. I cared not for that. I am a minister of death. I dropped the deadly drop into the oozing wound, more for myself than for you. I know my trade. I know the dreadful mystery of Bowanee—the deity of the Phansigars. You are to me as the tottering footsteps of the fearful child. Before you, all is uncertainty and doubt; before me, all is revealed and clear. Think not that I am disappointed; the deadly deity I serve has given me better wisdom. Simpleton! Double simpleton! I am thine enemy as much as his. Give me the opportunity, and I would drop the decomposing drop into thy blood as calmly as into his. Stare at me, European! Open thy weak and feminine eyes. It is true! Instead of being the master, thou art the neophyte and I the master. Sahib—" he pointed toward the bungalow, and the great carbuncle on his throat flamed in the afternoon-sun—"tell me where that airy structure will be in forty-eight hours? Tell me what will be the destiny of those who now respire beneath that thatched roof? If you can tell me these things, speak!"

"Hydrabad," said Bracegirdle, shivering, "I can not! If thou art Satan, say so; if thou art man, say so."

A troubled and sombre expression grew over the features of Raynor.

"I am intermediate," replied Hydrabad, turning the whites of his eyes upward. "I pendulate between heaven and hell; but I am ever nearest the last. What I do not know, will be whispered darkly in my ear. The inspirations of wickedness are ever present. To be all-powerful, you must be an angel or a demon. These two powers have it all their own way; and on this earth, it is impossible to tell who is the angel and who is the demon. You will find it thus. I have passed as a saint with weak women, when I was a fiend and a fallen spirit in the eyes of the all-pervading Deity."

Hydrabad arose; he stretched forth his muscular arms and his brown hands; he turned his mysterious eyes toward heaven; and laughed sardonically.

Raynor Bracegirdle instinctively drew back. His own wickedness seemed to threaten him; his own evil passions seemed rolling upon him like a mountain.

"Dark devil!" answered Raynor, with wonderful self-possession. "Think not that I am like your race. I laugh at your follies, and the tricks of your despicable order are lost

upon me. Begone! Show not your accursed face again. Look at this!" He drew a revolver from his breast. "There are six deaths in this! Away, and let me see you no more."

"Not so. We'll make another compact," said Hydrabad.

"Never! never!" cried Bracegirdle.

"Be not too confident, Sahib. You want the two maidens. You would bear away your country-woman and her starry-eyed maid," said Hydrabad, with cool assurance.

"Instead of studying new devices for my pleasure, why do you not ask why I struck?" demanded Raynor.

"Why should I ask what I know? My work was done; the deadly poison had been infused into his blood. You believed you had no further need of me. You wished no partnership with despised son of India. You thought a secret might be better kept by one than two. You were right! Had I been Bracegirdle and you Hydrabad, I would have slain Hydrabad. I cannot complain. It is the way of the world. My life is worth nothing to you any longer than it serves your purpose."

The native looked dreamily at the moonstone in the hilt of his dagger.

"Your philosophy is well suited to your condition. But tell me, wayward fatalist, how long before that drop will complete its mysterious work?"

"Its action is decisive, and your enemy will go back to the elements sooner than I predicted. In twenty-four hours, the fire in his body will be absorbed by the fire of the sun. The earthly particles will go to earth, the airy atoms to air, and the dust will be as it was in the beginning."

The native still gazed into the moonstone.

"Did you, or did you not, feel that you were suspected?" asked Raynor.

"I knew I was suspected, as I stood by the bedside. I read suspicion in the eyes that were leveled on me like spears. But I cared not when it is time for Hydrabad to give back the little spark within him to yonder glowing god of fire—he pointed to the sun—"it will fly to its starting-point as the shuttle flies to the hand of the weaver."

"You are a fire-worshiper!" said Bracegirdle, involuntarily.

"I know not what I worship, but I know that I am warned and lighted by the glittering rays of that glorious luminary. Heat and Light are the father and the mother of all things."

Hydrabad threw out his arms as if to bathe his hands in the eternal beams. He turned his face upward in gloomy ecstasy, as if to inhale a new afflatus from the sun.

"Talk not of matters so far away, and beyond the grasp of the senses of man. It is of more consequence to me to know who lives and who dies within the next twenty-four hours than to fathom all the mysteries of Fire and Air. Let us be practical. Kavanagh—he lowered his voice—"will—will—"

"Will give his fire to the fire of the sun," interposed Hydrabad.

"Away with your metaphors!" sneered Bracegirdle. "Kavanagh will die, unless you are a stupendous liar. Well? What then? I will tell you what I think the what-then will be: the circumstances of his death be so singular, that an English surgeon will be summoned from Cawnpoor or Lucknow, to examine the body."

Bracegirdle looked anxiously at Hydrabad, who laughed disdainfully.

"Let them," he answered, bring all the surgeons in India, and not one of them will be the wiser for the journey. If one should be bitten by a mad tiger, and die, think you that all the surgeons in the world could find the virus that produced the death? It is impossible! On that point, be at ease. And, besides—he fingered the flaming carbuncle—"the eye of a surgeon will never rest on the body of the young Englishman."

"What mean you?" hastily inquired Raynor.

"I mean that lightning may strike a tree and shiver it to atoms. What you do, do quickly."

Hydrabad's yellow features worked with that dark vehemence that characterized his inexplicable nature.

"Snatch the orange while it is within your reach," he resumed. "Pluck the grape while the cluster hangs low."

"I would fain do it, if I knew how!" muttered Raynor.

"The moonstone is clear in my sight. He that would do a thing, has but to try. I told you I was intermediate between direst Evil and extremest Good. I am. I possess a mystic life of which plodding earth-fools dream not. If I walk with Satan, whose care is it but mine? If I am the devil's hand, let those tremble only who feel my clutch!" His darting eyes flamed like the carbuncle on his throat.

"If Satan ever walked the earth in human form," said Bracegirdle, in a shivering voice, "him thou art! Avaunt, glittering devil!"

"Knowing me as you now know me, you perceive there is little need that I should ask what you most desire. Your mind is more transparent to Hydrabad than this moonstone. The love wherewith you love her is not love, but passion."

"Whom?" gasped Raynor.

"Melicent!" breathed Hydrabad, softly.

"The love wherewith you love the other," he continued, "is passion, and something more."

"Whom?" sighed Raynor.

"Alethe?" answered Hydrabad, yet more softly.

"You have caught me, Satan!" cried Raynor.

"Yes, European, I have caught you; but wanting you not, I give you back to yourself; or rather to your selfishness."

"Thanks for the gift!" retorted Raynor, ironically. "In consigning me to my own pleasures, you indeed give me to the devil. But these girls? They haunt me. Both mistress and maid have taken possession of my imagination, and give me no rest, day nor night. Yes, we will make yet another compact!"

"Said I not that?"

"Who but Satan should know what is to happen? I am ready to bargain with you."

"Say on."

"Can you provide me with horses and two bold, trusty fellows?"

"I can."

"Mark you, Hydrabad! They must not be effeminate and loitering rogues, but firm and hardy villains, who can look a European straight in the eyes without fear or favor, and who are as familiar with their weapons as with their own teeth."

"Such are within my reach. Had they been made for you, they could not be more conformable to your description. They are sons of the jungle. The Tigers tremble at the names of Tilac and Kassim. Tilac and Kassim are tiger-hunters and tiger-trainers."

"The very men!" exclaimed, Bracegirdle.

"And their services will cost you another thousand rupees," added the native.

"That will be two thousand rupees in all. I have not so many to spare, at present."

"Being aware of that fact, I have prepared a paper for you to sign; which is no more nor less than an order on the nabob, your father."

Hydrabad drew a paper from his breast with the utmost coolness. Raynor stared at him in wonder.

"It is no Satanic bond!" laughed the native. "I want no more of your soul than is contained in the rupees. Here is a pen; sign!"

Raynor Bracegirdle took the paper and found it in due form. His hand trembled when he received the pen from Hydrabad. He scrawled his name at the bottom of the draft.

"You observe," said Hydrabad, "that it is dated a week in advance, which prevents me from taking advantage of your confidence, and drawing the money before the service is rendered."

"Your honesty," retorted Raynor, very dryly, "is remarkable, and a little less than your foresight! Now, that matter being settled, the details of the scheme remain to be arranged. I am anxious that the venture should be made within forty-eight hours, at the furthest. Can your tiger-hunters be here?"

"Without fail."

"Let it be so. I trust myself in your hands yet again. Be faithful, and forget that my dagger found your shirt of mail."

"I bear no malice. When next you seek my life, aim at the throat, or try some more certain means. I die not easily."

"Do not for a moment—"

"Make no protestations!" interrupted Hydrabad, scornfully. "You know not what

may happen; nor need you trouble yourself about the future. When the hour comes to carry away mistress and maid, trust in Tilac. As for myself, do not be surprised if you see me little for the next two days. Take no thought about my absence or presence. When it is necessary for you to see me, you will find me at your elbow."

"I could almost swear to the last!" muttered Bracegirdle.

"You'll want an elysium for your hours," added the native, carelessly. "A safe retreat where your marriage may be arranged at your leisure."

He pronounced the word "marriage" in such a manner, that Bracegirdle started, as if he had stepped on a serpent. There was a cold and penetrating light in his eyes that was like the glitter of steel.

Raynor turned, and walked from him, impelled by a secret terror that he could not overcome. When he had gone a few paces, he looked for Hydrabad; but he had disappeared. Surprised by the circumstance, he went back and searched among the trees, and was finally obliged to leave the mystery as he had found it.

Never had an interview so strangely affected him. He half doubted his own identity. Hydrabad seemed, to his startled fancy, to be walking unseen at his side. He rather expected to hear his derisive laugh, or his clear, mocking, and sometimes melodious voice. With his dislike of the native, superstitious dread was also mingled. Fascination and fear exerted two opposing forces, from neither of which could he escape. If, influenced by the latter, he thought to fly from the bungalow, the former arrested his purpose and him fast.

CHAPTER XI.

MISTRESS AND MAID.

None of Major Rainbold's household understood the character of Kavanagh's dangerous symptoms, except Alethe. Vague suspicious had troubled Ida Macgregor, but they took no definite shape. Even Kavanagh was ignorant of the manner in which his wound had been tampered with; nor had he a clear view of the subject till Alethe enlightened him. The knavery of Hydrabad and the complicity of Bracegirdle were gradually unfolded to him by her, after he had slept, and was free from pain and anxiety.

The revelation was not so startling to him, however, as to Ida Macgregor, who received it with the utmost consternation. The attempt to take life by a method so cruel and cowardly, indicated a degree of wickedness which she found it difficult to conceive of. She dared not communicate this astounding development to her guardian, lest his impetuosity should bring swift judgment on the head of the criminal; neither did she feel at liberty to withhold it from Melicent.

Toward Alethe, the brave girl who had prevented the catastrophe, Miss Macgregor felt the deepest gratitude; and had her describe minutely the means by which she had gained possession of the plot; which had been by hiding herself in the hollow trunk of a banyan-tree, and hearing the conversation that passed between Bracegirdle and Hydrabad; in consequence of which she had made such extraordinary exertions to obtain the antidote from the old man Meerab.

Barnabas Hutton was too faithful and deserving not to be taken into her confidence; and as soon as Kavanagh was able to converse without detriment, the whole subject was freely discussed with him.

His honest ire was so much excited, that it required all the persuasive powers of the three, combined, to prevent him from taking instant vengeance on both the assassins.

After several cabinet-meetings, held in Kavanagh's chamber, it was concluded to let the matter rest till the following day. Barnabas, though at first opposed to the measure, was at length brought to consent by a few words from Alethe.

Not only the Major, but Melicent also, was mystified by the proceedings in Kavanagh's room. They were not satisfied, until Ida had in person assured them that the patient was doing well, and desired to be attended only by Barnabas Hutton and herself; that Alethe had applied some native remedies that were acting with singular efficacy; and other things of a similar nature.

Melicent was in an anomalous mental state. Her imagination had been captivated by Neal

Kavanagh. She could not herself define her feelings toward him. She thought him a hero and the woman who thinks a man a hero, is in a fair way to love him. Melicent went further. She said within herself, to herself: "He is handsome!" The woman who says within herself, to herself: "This man is handsome!" is already two thirds in love, whether she knows it or no. Melicent asked inwardly, if Ida Macgregor had discovered so many bright qualities in Kavanagh as she had done. She had watched Ida with the closest attention; but that young lady was self-conscious and such a model of propriety, that it was the hardest thing in the world to determine her mental state. If Melicent cherished tender sentiments for Lieutenant Kavanagh, she was much too proud and sensible to display them in an unbecoming manner.

The day was very irksome to her, and the danger of the young man disturbed her more than she was ready to admit. The promising change in his condition gave her real relief.

Near the close of the day, Alethe tripped into the garden to inhale the pure air, and think calmly of the incidents of the last twenty-four hours. Bracegirdle, ever prowling and vigilant, seized upon the opportunity, and approached her as if by chance. She beheld his advance with neither terror nor timidity. Knowing the man and his secret, she believed that she possessed an advantage of no trifling importance.

Raynor thought he would try the susceptibility of the maid, hoping she would prove more kind than the mistress.

"They call you Alethe?" he said, with a condescension that he well knew how to assume.

"Those who call me, call me Alethe," she answered.

"You might have been called Lethe; for your eyes are rivers of light, whose waters, once imbibed, may well render one oblivious to all else."

"What is Lethe?" she asked.

"One of the rivers of hell," answered Raynor, "whose waters produce forgetfulness of the past."

"Drink not of me!" returned Alethe, in a warning voice.

"Nay, fair creature, say not so! I would taste, though that forgetfulness were eternal."

"And I say unto you, Taste not!" responded Alethe, with a contemptuous toss of the head.

"Thou art like opium or hasheesh, that intoxicates the brain and fascinates the senses."

"Take neither opium nor hasheesh!" said she, curling her lip with contempt. "Go to my mistress, and tell her she is a drug; as for me, I am not the drug you want. I can exert but one power over you; and that is, for your destruction."

"I cannot understand you, dreamy Alethe. Those tropical eyes and those balmy lips can give nothing but bliss."

"To thee they can give neither." She paused before him, and looked up into his face. "Leave me," she added, "and go to your master."

"I have no master, girl!" replied Raynor, with hauteur.

"You have a master, and his name is Hydrabad," said Alethe, quietly.

"You have touched me more nearly than you think!" exclaimed Bracegirdle, taken by surprise, and off his guard. "What know you of this Hydrabad?" he asked.

"Enough to make me shun him; enough to make me shudder when he approaches; enough to make me keep out of his way answered Alethe, with earnestness.

"Bah! he is but a tricking juggler."

"I know not that. There is a dark spirit within him. Once he touched me with his finger, and I thought a serpent had bitten me."

Bracegirdle involuntarily shuddered.

"Let us not waste breath in talking of Hydrabad," he said. "It is you who have lured me hither. Listen to me, and make your choice quickly. Your mistress, cold and unfeeling, unwarned by the kindly influence of love, has rejected me, as if I were less than her slave. That rejected and scorned love I offer to you. Accept it, and we will fly together, to seek happiness in some calm and distant retreat, where neither envy nor malice shall reach us, to disturb our tranquillity or

dash the chalice of happiness from our lips." "A delightful picture! 'Tis a pity this speech could not have been heard by my mistress."

"She has heard it," replied Melicent, herself, stepping from behind a cluster of vines. "And it gives me great pleasure to know that Mr. Bracegirdle's heart has not been materially injured by me."

She laughed lightly, and added:

"Mr. Bracegirdle, if my maid says 'yes', I will not be so cruel as to say 'nay'. There will be no need, however, of flying to that distant retreat to drain the cup of bliss; for if the girl be willing, you can marry her here without trouble or perplexity, or the hazard of that long journey."

"Mock on, Miss Rainbold!" sneered Bracegirdle. "When the hour of my triumph arrives, perhaps I shall not remember this treatment."

"May that hour never come!" said Melicent, fervently.

"May it never come!" repeated Alethe, with equal earnestness. "And now," she added, looking at Raynor, "you are rejected by both mistress and maid, and I see nothing to detain you longer here. Hasten to that dark and glittering-eyed Hydrabad, and find a remedy for your disappointment."

"As the guest of your father, Miss Rainbold, I have a right to expect different treatment."

"You have a right to be scourged from hence with rods, like a cur that has turned and bitten its master!" cried Alethe, swelling with indignation.

"Alethe! Alethe!" interposed Melicent.

"My mistress, you know not the wickedness of this man; but the time is near when he shall be unvailed, and you shall see him as he is."

"I will order my horse, Miss Rainbold, and leave at once your inhospitable roof!" protested Raynor.

"I meant not, Mr. Bracegirdle, that the matter should go so far as that. As a guest, you are right welcome to remain, providing you forget this silly passion of love-making to every pretty face you chance to see. Bridle your anger and make the best of it," said Melicent, in a conciliatory tone.

Bracegirdle left them, threatening instant departure.

CHAPTER XII.

THE BANYAN-TREE.

"Alethe," said Miss Rainbold, when Bracegirdle had gone, "you have a secret! Share that secret with your too-indulgent mistress." The girl was silent.

"Alethe, have I been unreasonable with you in my willful and imperious moods?" Melicent's voice was very persuasive. Alethe kissed her hand.

"You have been as a sister and a friend. You have held me with silken fetters. My bondage has not been irksome."

She crossed her arms upon her breast, looked down, and sighed.

Melicent stroked her dark hair.

"Speak, Alethe!"

"My mistress, nothing should be hidden from you. Come with me. Do not be afraid; we will not go far. You see that patriarchal banyan-tree? That shall be the end of our walk."

Alethe preceded her mistress to the tree.

"This tree," she said, "is the parent of my secret. It is hollow. By pushing the tall grass aside, an opening may be found at the root. Suspecting the honesty of Hydrabad, I set Hafiz to watching him; and when Hafiz could not watch him, I watched him myself. Observing Hydrabad walking here, one day, in a very bad temper, on account of some words I had said to him, I hid myself inside this patriarch, and had not been there a great while, when I heard a conversation that well repaid me for my trouble. This conversation took place between Hydrabad and the young Englishman who came hither to woo my mistress."

"Go on!" said Melicent, nervously.

"Their discourse concerned Kavanagh, of whom Bracegirdle was intensely jealous. He bargained with Hydrabad to remove him from his path."

"This seems incredible!" exclaimed Melicent.

"The bargain was easily made. For one thousand rupees, he was to drop into the wound a poison so penetrating, that it would, in due time, produce death."

"I see—I partly comprehend," said Miss Rainbold.

"I wished to thwart this crafty villain in my own way. Knowing of one very learned in the mystery of drugs and poisons, I lost no time in seeking him; a journey that never could have been accomplished without the aid of Mr. Barnabas and his elephant. By the blessing of God I reached the hut of the solitaire and procured the antidote. The details of the adventure I will relate to you at some future time; for the undertaking was not unattended with danger. I had warned the young Sahib, before setting out, not to have Hydrabad approach him, or touch his arm; but when I returned, the mischief was done. Hydrabad had stolen in while he slept, and dropped the deadly agent into the wound. His condition, this morning, you can yourself recall to mind. I had supposed nothing would transpire before morning, and was shocked and alarmed at what I beheld. You know what followed. You saw the wily Hydrabad come in. You heard the words of Kavanagh concerning Mr. Barnabas, and what he said when he came in, he having been instructed by me. My mistress, behold this vial!" She held up the serpentine vial. "It sparkles in the red rays of the sinking sun like the souls of a hundred diamonds!"

"Truly, girl, it is like concentrated white flame! And so you dropped a drop of this glittering fluid into the wound?"

"I dropped it into the wound, my mistress, and the Sahib lives."

"It is most wonderful! Why was this kept from me?"

"Why does anything happen that happens? Why did Hydrabad come? Why did your lover come? Why are all things as they are? Because it is the will of God!" replied Alethe, with humility.

"A strange reason, but perhaps a good one. My impatient and impulsive nature might not have been able to practice the necessary restraint." Melicent paused, then laid her right hand on the girl's breast. "Alethe?" she said—her accents were melancholy.

"My mistress!" responded Alethe.

"Answer me this question. Do you hear me, Alethe?"

"I hear you, mistress."

"Answer this question, and answer it truly: Does Ida Macgregor—does Ida Macgregor—"

Melicent's voice failed her.

Alethe kissed her lips, and answered:

"Yes, sweet mistress, Ida loves him!"

Melicent threw her arms around the girl's neck, and sobbed like a child. Alethe felt the hot tears raining on her neck. She drew the exquisite head nearer and nearer, kept her soft lips on the white forehead, and tapped the smooth cheeks continuously with her little hand. There was ineffable balm in the silent ministrations of the girl. Never, never had Melicent realized the inestimable treasure of human sympathy. She clung to Alethe as if every hope and every happiness was in her.

The girl knew the mockery of words, and did not interrupt this passionate outburst of emotion. She permitted her to weep on, unrestrained. The paroxysm gradually passed; the tears ceased to flow, the sobs melted to sighs, and the sighs became lengthened respirations.

She was presently calm again. Embracing Alethe tenderly, she looked at the setting sun, and said, with composure:

"It is time to return. But before we go back, let me see you enter the hollow of this tree. Really, my friend, it seems impossible that this apparently solid trunk can contain a human being."

"You shall see!" cried Alethe, smilingly, and pushing away the grass, disappeared so suddenly that Melicent doubted the evidence of her eyes.

No sooner had the girl entered, than with a terrified cry she sprang out.

"Hafiz! poor Hafiz!" she cried, wringing her hands. "This is the reward of his faithfulness. This is his recompense for his devotion to me!"

"What is the matter?" asked Melicent.

"You are shocked and terrified."

"The poor youth," cried Alethe, "will never watch more. He is dead; he lies cold on the ground. He has been discovered and slain. I stumbled over his body; I touched his face, it was the face of a corpse. Hafiz! poor Hafiz!"

"Grieve not, Alethe. The sin of his death is not yours. Fortunately, here comes my father. His face glows with kindness! I love my father to-night."

"Waiting for another tiger, girls," cried the Major, "or have you set your caps for a Thug?"

"Father, hasten! Some one has killed Hafiz."

"Killed Hafiz! Where is he?" said the Major, with a self-possession quite at variance with the agitated feelings of Melicent.

"In this tree, which is hollow. Here is the entrance. There may yet be life in him. Have some one take him out," she answered, in a flurry of excitement.

"Demme," said the Major, "if he's dead, how can there be any life in him! Take him out? Can't I pull him out myself? Bless your body, I've carried a wounded man weighing two hundred and fifty pounds, right up out of a trench, without pulling an atom. Just put my hand on one of his heels, and see if he won't come out; that is, if the leg holds. And I never knew one to pull out, demme!"

The resolute Major, without more ado, flung his military cap on the ground, and getting on all fours, plunged into the hole like a bear into his den, and presently backed out, dragging poor Hafiz.

"Dead!" quoth the Major. "Demned dead! I should like to know what business the boy has to be dead! Well, girl, what have you got to say about this? Who killed him? Who tucked him in here? In the next place, how did you know that he was killed and tucked in here? This comes of woman's inquisitiveness, I s'pose. If you hadn't been inquisitive, you wouldn't know anything about it, and I shouldn't had my feelings hurt, demme!"

"Alethe was showing me the hollow in the tree," replied Melicent, "when, to her horror, she felt a dead body."

"That's just the way! If there's anything disagreeable, that girl is sure to find it out. If she'd minded her business, nobody would have been shocked, and Hafiz would have slept in the patriarch," growled the Major.

"This is very said. Look at him, father!"

"I am looking at him. Can't see stab, jab, nor shot. A person ought to be stabbed, jabbed, or shot! If he isn't, he has no right to die a violent death."

"Look at his neck," said Alethe.

"What the devil should I look at his neck for! Come; don't dictate to a man that's mounted breaches, sword in hand. Such nonsense won't answer, you see. Bless my body! Here's a regular welt round the neck. The poor lad died by a cord!"

"A Thug!" exclaimed Alethe.

"A Thug!" gasped Melicent.

"A Thug, demme!" vociferated the Major, somewhat awed. "This accursed country ought to be sunk; and I'd sink it, if I had the management of it. If you want to kill a person shoot him, stab him, poison him; but, demme, don't put a string round his neck! You're pale, Melicent. What's the use of being pale? Might as well laugh as cry!"

The Major ground his teeth together and shook his fists in the air. His honest nature was aroused. He wanted to draw his sword and immolate somebody. He wished all the Strangers in India had but one neck, and he had that neck between his thumb and finger. Would he not wring that neck?

CHAPTER XIII.

BRACEGIRDLE.

Alethe only knew the manner in which Hafiz had met his death. It was evident to her that he had hidden himself in the tree, to observe the movements of Hydrabad; and had, unhappily, been discovered and strangled by the crafty native. With her knowledge of the circumstances, this seemed a natural and probable solution of the subject.

The Major gazed at Hafiz a long time. The purple track around his neck filled him with peculiar horror. He thought of Ida, and was more than ever grateful for her deliverance from a like fate.

"Where is Hydrabad?" he asked, abruptly.

Neither Melicent nor Alethe could answer this question.

"I haven't seen the white-eyed devil since morning. I must shoot him at a venture, demme! Or, if I had a few faithful Sepoys, hanging would be better. But Sepoys can't be trusted now," sighed the Major. "No—"

body is to be trusted now." (He pointed to the body of Hafiz.) "We have secret enemies in our midst. Satan is in our own household. Those who eat from our plate and drink from our cup deceive us. How long shall these things be?"

"Is there no way of escape from this dreadful country?" asked Melicent.

"We are hemmed in on every side, my child. There is a circle of fire around us. India is abandoned to rapine and murder. The sword of the avenging Sepoy waves warningly over our heads. I can no longer conceal from you that we are not safe for a day—not even for an hour. There have been dreadful doings at Cawnpore and Delhi. The revolted natives are prowling through the country like hordes of ravenous tigers. The European residents are being swept away with fearful haste. The circle narrows upon us. One of our servants, whom I can yet rely on, brought me tidings this afternoon of new inhumanities. The infuriated wretches are surging in this direction. They may be here to-morrow—they may be here to-night. It is of you and Ida that I think."

"Would not the Government, if it knew your situation, send some soldiers to your relief?" asked Melicent.

"If they were native soldiers, my poor girl, our danger instead of being lessened would be increased; for the Sepoys still in the service of the Government cannot be trusted out of sight of their masters. They will not fight their brethren without a regiment of British troops behind them. We can neither reach the little garrison at Cawnpore nor the heroes besieged at Lucknow. Here we are, about as helpless as possible. Neal Kavanagh has got himself eaten by a tiger, and lies on his back in a miserable state; and there's nobody to fight but the tall American, Bracegirdle, and myself."

"Don't count much on Bracegirdle."

"Ah! he's hors du combat, is he?" Major Rainbold laughed. "Wounded, is he, by those two howitzers of yours? Can't carry the works—can he? The dog hasn't mettle enough. When I's a young man of his age, I wouldn't have abandoned a besieged fortress on no account. I'd laid under the walls six months, carrying my lines of circumvallation nearer every day, demme! I don't believe the boy knows how to work his batteries."

"Nor will he ever learn," replied Melicent, seriously.

"Isn't he good at a short range, eh?"

"He's good at nothing," interposed Alethe, "but bad at everything."

"Come, come," replied Rainbold, pleasantly, "her own cannonade is enough. She shall have no re-enforcement. Raynor shall have fair play, and if he can make a breach and storm the citadel, like a gallant fellow, let him do it. Don't you open fire on him, girl. If you do, I'll take you in hand myself, I will, demme!"

"My mistress will never strike her flag to him," muttered Alethe, tossing her head.

"This is against all authority and discipline. I tell you the siege shall go on by regular approaches, and nobody shall meddle or make."

"Father," answered Melicent, with emotion, "you are fatally deceived in Raynor Bracegirdle. I regret to tell you that he is utterly unworthy of your friendship, trust, and hospitality. He has neither principle nor magnanimity, honor nor candor."

They were walking toward the house. The Major stopped and looked searchingly at his daughter.

"These are grave charges," he said; "but you are a girl of sense, Melicent. If Raynor had committed murder, you couldn't speak much worse of him. He is the son of an old friend. Don't talk about the son of an old friend, unless you have reason."

"Major," returned Melicent, smiling tenderly, and taking her father's hand; "the son of an old friend deceived you! Raynor Bracegirdle and that dark spirit, Hydrabad, are leagued together in evil. But for Alethe, your brave and generous friend, Kavanagh, would now be past medication."

They had reached the veranda, and Barnabas Hutton came out to meet them. His ready ears caught the concluding words of Melicent.

"Right, Miss Rainbold, right! I'm glad 'Lethe's told ye about it, and that you've got

courage enough to tell your father, without regard to consequences. The truth is, Major, the critter tried to pizen the Lieutenant jist out o' jealousy, and spite, and intarnal wickedness generally. But he didn't quite do it. You see this little gal, don't ye, Major?" He pointed at Alethe, and his face beamed all over. "You see that sample of eye, don't ye? Well, 'twas that sort o' material that was on hand, and took the wind out o' his sails quicker'n you can say 'demme!'"

"Demme!" exclaimed Rainbold.

"That's about E pluribus! Demme's pretty much the talk for the times. I ain't a profane man, Major, but I've no objections to unitin' with ye in sayin' demme!"

"Demme!" repeated the Major, setting his teeth hard together.

"Demme!" echoed Barnabas, with becoming spirit. "Yes, he tried to pizen him. He dropped a drop o' some kind o' confounded stuff into that tiger-chaw, which was worse nor aker-fortis biled down, and went into his system like the knockrelation o' smallpox. You wouldn't nat'rally suppose that an animile so big as my Methuselah should have anything to do with so small a thing as a drop o' pizen. But he did! And he had some't to do"—he glanced archly at Alethe—"with something a little larger nor a drop o' pizen, and a wounded sight more wholesome."

"Tell me how the boy is, now?" interrupted the Major, in a great heat.

"He's E pluribus, demme!" responded Barnabas, with unwonted energy. "But he couldn't been E pluribus demme if it hadn't been for her."

"Confound it! will you try and get at something?" blurted the Major.

"We're gettin' at the pizen, and the anecdote to the pizen, about as rapid as an elephant can trot. Pizen and anecdotes go together, you know, like a man and his wife; which allers neutralizes each other, and counteracts each other in every way, shape, and natur'. 'Bring out Methuselah,' sez she. So I brought him out. 'Make him kneel,' sez she. So I made him kneel. Then we scrambled on his back, and scuttled away like fury arter the anecdote, though, mind ye, I hadn't no more idee that I was goin' for an anecdote than nothin'. We whisked along astonishin'. There wasn't nothin' but one blur o' jungles afore our eyes. I can't tell how many tigers, lions, and other animile kingdoms we run down on the way; 'twixt a hundred wagin-loads, probably."

"Can't you get along a little faster, Mr. Hutton?" queried the Major, who preferred practical facts to immaterial details.

"I'm goin' as fast as the elephant can get over the ground. As I was sayin', on we went, at elephantine speed, till we come to the hut, cave, or den, where the great Moon-she burrowed. We alighted from our conveyance, and 'Lethe popped in upon the Moon-she, and was out o' sight a good spell. Presently I heard a little scream—the prettiest little scream that ever come to my ears—and was mighty anxious."

"'Push in, Methuselah,' sez I, and he crushed the door immediate. Springin' in, I see—"

"You need not tell what you saw, Mr. Barnabas," interrupted Alethe. "I rather you would not tell what you saw, Mr. Barnabas."

"Jest as you say, Miss; it's all E pluribus to me," said Hutton. "So we'll slur over the cord-business, and come to the gray-bearded old Moon-she at onct, who was proper loth to give up the anecdote, or counter-pizen, and it was only by threatenin' him with death by Methuselah that we succeeded eventually in gittin' a little crooked bottle, about as big round as your darter's smallest finger, and as white."

"You've made a needlessly long story of it, Mr. Hutton. You might have said that you went somewhere and got an antidote, applied it in time, counteracted the poison, saved Kavanagh's life, and ended the whole thing in three sentences," retorted the Major. "Demme, sir, you want the bluff brevity of a soldier!"

"Hold on, Major! Stick your sword there. Wasn't you two hours, yesterday, workin' in ditches, trenches, handlin' scalin'-ladders and mountin' breaches, and makin' racket enough with musketry and artillery to stun a nation, when you might a said, 'I took

the fortress', which would told the story in four words."

"You've cornered me, demme! And you are an honest man, which is more than I can say of anybody here but myself." The Major drew a couple of revolvers from his pockets, and began to examine them.

"What you goin' to do with them, Major?" asked Barnabas.

"If you're a brave man, I shouldn't think you'd ask!" retorted Rainbold, tartly.

"E pluribus, Major!" said Hutton, nodding his head, knowingly. "That's right. I wanted to go into the business permiscuously this mornin'; but the gals wheedled me out on t. The gals can do most anything with me, I guess. I allers succumb to maulin and eyes. Eyes, mind ye!" He glanced at Alethe with unusual significance. "There was allers eternally a soft streak in my character. I wish to the Lord folks could be made without soft streaks in their characters."

Barnabas mused on that subject a moment. Then, to the Major:

"You'll shoot, of course? But it's too easy for such a rogue. Can't you call one or two of the natyves, and run him up somewhere? There's plenty o' trees, you know."

"No, Mr. Hutton, I cannot hang him. He is the son of my friend!"

Major Rainbold grew very thoughtful. Another feeling mingled with his anger. He began to doubt whether he could shoot the son of his friend. There was a painful struggle within. Barnabas perceived it.

"Major," said he, gravely, "I see how it is with you. You can't do it! No, you can't! There's a notion of honor inside of you that is stronger than your just resentment. I'll take the matter off your hands. He is not the son of my friend; and I thank the good Lord for it! What's he fit for, Major? Is he fit to live? He isn't. Is he fit to die? As fit as he'll ever be, if he goes on as he's begun. The quicker he's destroyed, the better man he'll die. So, if I find him, I'll just say to him: 'Mister Bracegirdle, you an' I are to have a shootin'-match. Take this revolver or this 'un, for they are loaded precisely alike, and hold six shots apiece, and station yourself yender, and when I've counted three, blaze away at me, and do your best to hit me, for I shall hit you, you may depend on't!' Words to that purport I shall use."

Hutton had taken the pistols from Rainbold, and stood with them in his hand, as quietly and composedly as if the purpose he meditated were an everyday affair.

"If you propose to treat the villain in this manner," said the Major, "you'll do him too much grace, and put your own honest life in jeopardy."

"Life," returned Barnabas, "is allers in danger. Neither you nor I can git out o' this world till we're wanted in another."

"You but waste time," said Alethe; "I saw the Englishman ride from the bungalow half an hour ago. A rogue must be caught before he can be punished."

"Go in, children," said the Major, kindly. "Mr. Hutton and I must put our wits together and devise, if possible, a method of warding off the many dangers that beset us. Flight may at any moment become necessary; and Heaven only knows where we can fly for safety."

Melicent and the girl entered the bungalow, and the Major and Barnabas passed to and fro in the veranda, conversing earnestly.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE SEPOYS.

Suddenly, Barnabas Hutton sprang from the veranda and ran swiftly toward the jungle. The Major, surprised at the action, followed at a slower pace; but had not proceeded far, when he heard a pistol-shot, speedily followed by another.

Barnabas reappeared in a moment.

"I caught a glimpse of our man," he said, "as I stood in the veranda. He was mounted on his horse, ridin' moderately along. I run arter him, as you see, thinkin' it was a good time to settle that matter. When I got down there by the palm-trees, I caught sight of him ag'in. He was settin' on his animile, a talkin' with two wild-lookin' men. I called to him to come to me on partic'lar business; instead o' which he turned tail and started off at a gallop, when I sent a couple o' shots arter him, jest as an intimation of my good-will, and to keep him at a proper distance; for I

tell you, Major, the further he is from you and yours, the safer you'll be."

"I am of the same mind," answered Rainbold. "To tell you the truth, I am greatly astonished at my own blindness respecting the son of my friend."

"I'll tell you, Major, where the mistake was: you took him on trust. If he'd been the son of somebody you knew nothing about, you'd had your eyes open, I'll be bound."

"Exactly!" said Rainbold. "We are often deceived by other people than ourselves. One ought to follow the dictates of his own common-sense, instead of taking for granted what remains to be proved."

Rainbold had scarcely concluded this sage observation, when six Sepoys, with musket at shoulder, and pistol and dagger at side, defiled from the trees in the quarter of the usual approach to the grounds, and marched with a very soldier-like air to the front of the bungalow, where, seeing the Major, they saluted him in military style.

"Keep close to me, Barnabas!" whispered Rainbold, whose surprise was only equalled by his distrust. "Keep close to me, for there's no knowing what these fellows mean." Then stepping forward and returning their salute, he said:

"What brings you here, my fine fellows?"

"Major," answered one of the sepoys, respectfully, "your friend, General Havelock, sent us to you; thinking, in these troubled times, you might want us."

"The General was ever a warm friend and a considerate officer," replied Major Rainbold, disguising his suspicions. "In what condition did you leave Cawnpoor?"

"Closely besieged," replied he who had spoken.

"It being closely besieged, how did you leave it?" asked the Major, carelessly.

"May it please you, Sahib, we have not been in Cawnpoor," said the Sepoy, touching his cap. "General Havelock is on his way to relieve the suffering garrison; and knowing the deeds that are daily done by the mutinous and disaffected, and that you were not a moment safe, dispatched us to you with all haste. It was a difficult matter, Major, to elude and deceive our desperate countrymen; but, by the will of God, here we are."

"Very fine martial fellows, too!" said the Major, shaking hands with the spokesman of the party. "If I was able to take the field again, I should want no greater honor than to command a regiment of such straight soldier-like boys. To the right, face! March yonder to the quarters of my lazy louts, and tell them it is my order that you have the best that can be found, both to eat and to drink."

The Sepoys, stiff and military, walked like automata toward the huts of the servants. Rainbold watched them till they disappeared.

"What do you think, Mr. Hutton?" he asked. "Is this a blessing or otherwise?"

"Major," answered Barnabas, "it don't seem to me *E pluribus*. It don't. No! That General Havelock should think of a wounded officer some thirty miles distant, while surrounded by those yaller devils, and not a man to spare, fightin' his way foot by foot toward Cawnpoor, is some'at to me that isn't quite clear."

"You speak my own doubts," said Rainbold, in a troubled tone. "In those men who have just left us, I have not a particle of faith. My poor girls! my poor girls! Barnabas—" he held out his hand to Hutton, and his voice quavered—"They must not fall into the hands of the Sepoys!"

"Heaven, in its infinite goodness, forbid!" exclaimed Barnabas, with more feeling than Rainbold had given him credit for. "I'd sooner shoot 'em with this right hand, than see 'em thus abused; than see 'em thus abandoned to degradation and shame, and cruelty terrible!"

Hutton was so inspired, that his manner was really dignified and noble.

"It were indeed a mercy to give the dear creatures death to save them from outrage, And if worst comes to worst, I will trust in you, my friend. I could not do it! The ineffable love that is within me would turn the weapon sooner upon myself," said Rainbold, hoarsely.

"Major," cried Barnabas, with a tear on his cheek, "you're *E pluribus*! I'll stand by you, my hearty, till all is blue. Sink me, if I don't draw my sword and hack, gash, slash,

and chop for you, as long as I can move a muscle! And not for you only, but for them, you know. For them! Them is too tender, and sweet, and handsome, to be clapperclawed by such sooty devils. They be. Yes! I see where you are, Major Rainbold. I'm glad I'm here to help ye. As soon as them critters have eat and drunk, station 'em one in a place, at different p'int, within a given distance of the bungalow. There's only six of 'em, at the most; and in partin' 'em you destroy their strength. The story about bein' sent by Havelock hasn't a word's truth in't. Scatter 'em about in this way, and leave the rest to Barnabas Hutton and his elephant."

"Ah, that elephant," said the Major, thoughtfully.

"The same!" replied Barnabas, with pride. "Methuselah is worth a dozen Seboys, any time. I have only to whisper in one of his large ears to make him know what's wanted. He's do-cile with his master but mistrustful of strangers. His rage is terrific. Play him a trick, and see if he don't remember it! If I should say to him, 'Methuselah, pull down this bungalow,' he'd tear it to bits afore you could bring out your rupees. Major, Methuselah shall go the rounds to-night."

Barnabas took Rainbold by the sleeve, and added:

"If you should have to take to your heels, he'll carry you and yours, with as much speed and safety as a steamboat or a train o' cars. Now, my friend, go in and load all your fire-arms, and leave me outside a while."

"Mr. Hutton, I like your advice so well that I shall follow it." So the Major went in, leaving Barnabas to take such precautions as his sharp wit would suggest, and to give warning if danger seemed near.

CHAPTER XV.

YES, MR. BARNABAS!

The six native soldiers, having been abundantly supplied with food, sauntered back to the bungalow in a fashion much less military than they had come into the presence of Major Rainbold. They were received by Barnabas Hutton and his elephant; a reception which, manifestly, did not give them satisfaction.

Without mincing matters, he at once assumed control of their movements. With Methuselah rolling lazily at his side, he placed one at one place, another at another, and so on till the six were disposed of. He ended this highly military maneuver by informing the Sergeant who commanded the party, that Major Rainbold, with the few English friends who had arrived that afternoon, would sleep in the bungalow, ready to start up at the first intimation of danger; an announcement which was received without visible emotion.

These preliminaries being settled, Hutton and his dumb companion walked slowly and monotonously the rounds, in a circle not only comprising the house, but the sentinels and a portion of the grounds. The patient Methuselah went surging uncomplainingly on his beat, with his master by his side, at first, but, anon on his broad back.

The dim night-hours slipped silently away. About midnight, when Barnabas was passing the hollow banyan, which was within the orbit of his beat, he was surprised at beholding the figure of Alethe, and instantly let himself down from his lofty perch.

"Be quiet, Mr. Barnabas," she said. "Your voice is apt to be loud."

"I'll be whatever you bid me, Brownie," replied Barnabas. "What brings you here? I should think you'd be afear'd of your shadow, e'enamost. Occasionally I feel queer myself; and, in fact," he added, with a sigh, "I allers feel queer when I see your eyes."

"Speak very low, Mr. Barnabas! I come to tell you of the danger. I've carried arrack to some of the men, and talked freely of the English. They have come to rob and to murder; and Hydrabad sent them," said Alethe.

"Are you sure of this?" asked Hutton anxiously.

"They are my countrymen; we speak the same language. Why should I not hear and apprehend?"

"You should do both."

"I have done so, Mr. Barnabas. The men are to be killed, the women carried away. This is the work of Hydrabad."

"The tawny devil!" muttered Hutton.

"The spirit of evil dwells in him. You may call him Satan, and do him no wrong. Mr. Barnabas, the young Englishman, though brave, is unable to fight; the Major can, and will fight; but it is to you that we must look mainly for help. If you cannot save us, we had better never been born!"

"But you, Lethe, have nothin' to fear. You are a natyve."

"I shall fare no better than the English ladies," she replied, sadly. "I am not much like my people. I have become English in habit, education, association, and thought. My skin is somewhat dark, Mr. Barnabas, but that circumstance will not greatly serve me in the hour of murder and cruelty."

"You are more English than I, Miss Lethe; you use the English language a deal better nor I can. But I s'pose it comes o' livin' with eddicated ladies. Eddicated ladies has the tongue, Lethe, yet Barnabas Hutton has the heart."

"Nothing could be truer, Mr. Barnabas, than what you last said. But we are spending that which we shall perhaps want, by and by. Melicent and Ida have sent me to you. They walk to and fro, wringing their hands. Mr. Kavanagh has arisen and dressed himself; he has his pistols in his bosom, his left arm in a sling, and in his right hand his sword. He is wonderfully changed since morning. He feels no pain. His cheeks glow, but not with fever; his arm is no longer hot and swollen, but his mortal agony is intolerable. He paces his chamber, pronouncing continually the names of Ida and Melicent."

"He ought to speak yours too," said Barnabas.

The girl bowed her head meekly, and sighing, said:

"Mr. Barnabas, I am a servant. Why should the handsome European talk of one so humble?"

"Lethe," replied Hutton, quite affected, "There was some'at that pained me in your voice when you said them last words. I don't know what it was, but it pinched me like the p'int of a dagger. Perhaps you don't know what I mean, Lethe?"

"I do! I do!" sobbed the girl. "I thank you most fervently. I thank you on my knees, Mr. Barnabas! Yours is the only voice that speaks to me as I would be spoken to."

"No, Brownie, you don't mean that," answered Barnabas, sadly. "You mean there is some'at in my voice that you wish was in the voice of another. That is what you wish, Brownie, and that is what you mean. I know you'd shrink from tellin' on't, or lettin' it be known in any manner; but the man as loves you; the man as loves you true and honest; and as loves you only; and as loves you the first and the last, can see it, and know it, and feel it."

"Oh, Mr. Barnabas!" gasped Alethe.

"Be silent, my pretty 'un! Don't say nothin' that you don't want to say. Don't be betrayed into an unguarded expression by me. I ain't the man as would intrude. Not at all—not in the least. But, Brownie dear, understand this: I am your friend; true and tried, and constant, and undoubting, and to the end, and arter the end, if there is anything arter the end. That's what I am! That's what Barnabas Hutton is. And he hopes to prove it."

"O Mr. Barnabas!"

"You say it pleasant. You're so good inside, that you wouldn't care to hurt one's pride and sensitiveness. I love you deep and true, as I said; but I shan't tell you on't; I shall keep it to myself, nigh about. But I'll tell ye what I can do; I can fight for you awful! I can take you under one arm, and clear a path for you with the other through an army of men. That's what I can do. Are you hearin' me, Brownie?"

"Yes, Mr. Barnabas!"

Her accents were marvelously soft and silvery. Barnabas felt as if a thousand notes of music were thrilling upon his ears simultaneously. His honest nature knew not what to do with its sweet yet torturing burden. So he let a watery drop or two run down his round cheeks.

"Mr. Barnabas, will you shake hands with me?" asked Alethe, modestly.

"Will I go to heaven!" asked Barnabas.

So he took the brown little hand, and after

shaking it, kissed it. He felt infinitely happier. He didn't know what made him happier, but he did know the fact. They stood some time together, he holding her hand all the while. He didn't take advantage of holding her hand, and so she trusted him the more.

"I s'pose it's impossible?" said Barnabas, finally.

"It may not be," said Alethe, gently.

The moon shone very brightly, just then; and the stars had a wondrous contentment in them.

"It's the Sepoys, you know!" said Alethe, by and by.

"Yes, it's the Seboys!" responded Barnabas, kissing her hand again. She drew it away, saying:

"You won't let us fall into their hands Mr. Barnabas?"

"Not while I live! Not while I live, 'Lethe! I won't be responsible for what takes place arter I'm dead; but while the breath o' life is in me, you won't fall, alive, into the hands of them tawny murderers."

Barnabas Hutton, with his disengaged hand, caressed the trunk of his elephant, looked at the stars, and then at the eyes of Alethe. Whatever might come, he thought he could never be miserable again.

"I am going back," said Alethe, softly.

"My soul will go with you," replied Barnabas, "and my body will go as far as the veranda."

"I shall tell them how faithful you are," added Alethe.

"I care for the opinion of one woman, only," said Barnabas.

And so they parted at the veranda.

He never saw such a night before, did Barnabas. He never expected to see another such night, did Barnabas. They never come but once, such nights! Never! Never! Never! Few know it, though; very few know it, and none realize it.

Barnabas went his rounds again, carrying with him a very different world from what he commenced the night with. It was a very good night! It was a very good moon! Those were very good stars!

Danger had nothing to do with Barnabas; Barnabas had nothing to do with danger. And that was all.

He was not prepared, yet, for another thought. It was necessary that he should go round a little on the back of Methuselah to get hold of the recent Barnabas. He got hold of him presently—sturdier, stronger, bolder than ever. Alethe had so got into his arms and his imagination, that he didn't suppose there was a Sepoy in the world that could stand before him.

CHAPTER XVI.

A PLEASANT THING TO HAVE GIRLS ON YOUR HEART.

The change that took place in Neal Kavanagh during the day in which the mysterious antidote had been applied, was very marked and wonderful. The dreamy, half-conscious state into which he fell was followed, by and by, by a refreshing sleep, from which he awoke late in the afternoon, free from fever, and without pain. To find himself watched over by Ida Macgregor, was a knowledge that thrilled him with pleasure. He passed the intervening time until dark, in cheerful conversation, referring as little as practicable to the cause of his sudden illness.

Miss Macgregor, from the window, witnessed the arrival of the native soldiers.

"We are not forgotten by our friends, Mr. Kavanagh," she said. "Here are re-enforcements for the Major."

"Re-enforcements?" asked Kavanagh, with bewilderment.

"Yes. One, two, three, four, five, six! Six Sepoys, with muskets on shoulder, and side-arms in belt. O Mr. Kavanagh, we shall be protected!"

"Sepoys!" muttered Kavanagh, aghast.

"Assuredly, Mr. Kavanagh. Why not?" said Ida, carelessly.

"Is there an English officer with them Miss Macgregor?"

"No," replied Ida, slightly surprised at his earnestness.

"Miss Macgregor," cried Kavanagh, in a startling tone, "you had better see six ravenous tigers before your guardian's house, than those six Sepoys!"

Ida was astounded. She contemplated the pale and apprehensive face of Kavanagh with

unaffected amazement. She did not recover immediately from the shock. The young man's meaning went throbbing through her brain. The real danger unfolded before her.

"O Mr. Kavanagh!" she murmured. "You have put my blood in a flutter. I am faint at heart. Instead of our safety, they are our danger. How could I, for a moment, have been so incredibly blind!"

"These," he added, dismally, "are the carrion-crows that scent a gorge afar off. They must be looked to, Miss Macgregor. Will you kindly act as my servant, and request Major Rainbold to come to me instantly. And, Miss Macgregor, place my pistols on this table within my reach; they hang on yonder hook. Thank you! Now, please hasten to the Major."

The moment Ida left the room, Kavanagh sprang from the bed, fastened the door, and dressed himself. His left arm gave him some trouble, but he managed the business very well with his right. He had completed his toilet before the Major appeared.

"Demme, Sir, what do you mean!" was the bluff salutation of that officer. "What right have you to get up and dress without orders? We must have discipline in the garrison, my boy."

"My dear Major, bodily I feel wonderfully well; but my mind is ill at ease. Whence came these yellow Sepoys?" answered the young man.

"From the devil, I think!" grumbled Rainbold. "And I should like to send them back to him post-haste."

"Thank Heaven! You are aware of the danger!" exclaimed Kavanagh.

"I have been too long a soldier, to be deceived by a shallow artifice."

"What disposition will you make of them?"

"I have committed them to the hands of Barnabas and his elephant," replied Rainbold.

"A very discreet arrangement. I have infinite faith in the sagacity of Barnabas Hutton. What does he propose to do?"

"Scatter 'em about, under the pretence of having them watch the bungalow, to guard against surprise. They've gone to the huts of my servants to gorge. When Barnabas has posted them, you shall have a glimpse of 'em yourself from the windows. We will then be governed by circumstances; if we don't anticipate their deviltry, it'll be strange, demme!" Major Rainbold had buckled on his sword, and thereupon shook it till it rattled in the scabbard. He looked from a window commanding a view of the servants' quarters. "Gorge, you wolves!" he growled. "Gorge, while you have the chance! The opportunity won't last long. Improve it, you hounds!"

"What of your native servants, Major?" Kavanagh inquired, uneasily.

"Luckily, Kavanagh, many of 'em have run away, leaving me mostly women and children. There are but three or four able-bodied men among my serfs. Well, let 'em go! It is better to lose 'em than trust 'em."

"Far better! Yet it would perhaps have been still better had you shot them before they started."

"I didn't have that privilege, my boy! They didn't have the politeness to announce their intentions."

"If you have four male servants," said Kavanagh, musingly, "you may add just that number to the Sepoys; for, my word for it, they'll be the first to have their hands at your throat. Ah, Major, you should see the sights that I have seen! The hackings, hangings, shootings, and mutilations! We have taken the monsters while their hands were yet wet with the blood of tender women. Enormity and outrage have held high carnival. European Christianity may shudder at the idea of shooting these miscreants from guns, from marching them out to death in squads of tens and twenties, from hunting them down without pity, from slaying without judge or jury; but those only who have witnessed the atrocities of the native soldiers can judge correctly of the stern retaliation demanded."

"Spoken like a soldier, if not like a Christian," said Rainbold.

"Major," continued Kavanagh, "not one of those Sepoys must return to his companions with the story of the murder and outrage of Major Rainbold's family."

"That is my determination. There are

various ways of disposing of them. For instance, we might call them in, one at a time, and whip off their heads."

"If they have the ferocity of the panther, they have also the cunning of the fox," answered Kavanagh. "I doubt if one of the number could be decoyed into the house, alone. We do not trust them; they do not trust us. My dear Major—a flush of fever darted into his cheeks—"you have priceless treasures beneath this roof. You have beauty, innocence, and helplessness. They must be defended, though our own breasts form the only rampart between them and the foe. We are not to think that we have counted our enemies in those six grim soldiers. We may suppose that others are lurking in the jungle; and when the flames begin to stream from this roof, they, by accident or through complicity, will be here, or rush to the spot."

"Of course, I have thought of this. The heart of a father does not sleep in times like these. I have more at stake than rupees. There is my Melicent and my Ida—both my children; one of the proper issue of my body, the other of my affections. Let me be just, Kavanagh; let me speak of Alethe; more my child than you wot of."

Rainbold's hand rested quietly on the hilt of his sword, and his eyes appeared to be unaccountably busy with something on the floor.

"Yes," said Kavanagh, with a sigh, "there is Alethe! Of all men, I should be the last to forget Alethe."

"Kavanagh, my boy, you ought to be shot from a gun, if you forget Alethe!"

Rainbold spoke with feeling. His eyes seemed belogged and rather dim.

"My dear Major," added Kavanagh, "I honor your sensibility. Never blush for Alethe. Her dark and glorious beauty is a thing to wonder at. The blood of India is softened by that of England, if I err not, and everlasting shame be upon him who blushes to own her!"

"You're a lad after my own heart, demme!" cried the impulsive Rainbold, seizing the young officer by his wounded arm and giving it a jerk that nearly took the life from his body. "You're a man, demme! You're just a man, demme! Bring me somebody that denies it; bring him right along. I want to see that person!"

The excited Major gave Kavanagh's arm another wrench.

"Really, my friend," said the Lieutenant, wincing, "you are dislocating my injured arm."

"Ah," added Rainbold, "if my Melicent, or my Ida—But what's the use? There isn't any use! Why, of course not! What the deuce are you talking about? What's the matter, eh?"

"Nothing of any consequence: only that's my wounded arm that you've got hold of!" groaned Kavanagh, smiling feebly.

"Bless my body! I've started the blood, haven't I? Demme, Sir, what did you let me hurt you for? Haven't you any feeling, Sir? Dear me! let me call the girls. Girls know how to fix these things, Sir. Which will you have; one or three?"

The Major's distress was ludicrous.

"Handsome villain!" he added, making a dive at the arm. "Insidious allurer! How have you repaid my hospitality? What with Thugs, and what with tigers, and what with Bracegirdle, and what with Hydrabad, and what with drops and antidotes, midnight-journeys, mystery and moonshees, you've played the devil with my household!"

"Dear Major—"

"I'll send up Ida, you traitor! My own girl, perchance, may have a random heart-ache on account of that tiger; but she has too much sense, and is too much like her father, demme, to be dazzled by a mere accidental victory over a four-footed beast. Either of the three is too good for a Lieutenant in the British Army; although, if you insist upon it, I suppose I shall have to sacrifice one of 'em. Well, it don't make much difference to me whether it's the haughty-headed queen—that's Melicent—or the sweet and dignified saint—that's Ida—or the dreamy, soft-eyed houri—which is Alethe. They're all on my hands—and on my heart, too, my boy. It's the pleasantest thing to have girls on your heart! You never had 'em on your heart, did you? It's the sweetest trouble to have 'em on your heart!"

The Major's hand slid from the hilt of his

swell and went up to his head; and his heart was on it; and there was a vast deal of thought in the Major's head. It didn't hurt the Major; it humanized him.

So the Major presently arose—a better Major than when he came in; a better man than when he came in; a milder-faced gentleman than when he came in; a happier person than when he came in.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE ZODIACAL LIGHTS.

Ida came up, rather trembling and downcast; rather uncertain and startled; rather of the opinion that something would happen. Something happened. Kavanagh made it happen. And it was in this manner:

When Ida entered there was an unusual glow and fervor on his face. The danger and responsibility had inspired him. He was walking to and fro, in a state of mind both disturbed and exalted. He had girt his sword to his side, and placed his pistols in his belt, fully and entirely determined, in case of an assault, to sell his life dearly. The magnanimity of his nature was reflected in his countenance.

"O Mr. Kavanagh!" exclaimed Ida. "What madness induced you to arise? Exercise will inflame your wound, and fever will set in."

"Miss Macgregor, I am not to be thought of. I am a soldier. Soldiers are to fight, and die bravely for beauty. I am to be lost sight of utterly in this cruel strait."

"Is the peril, then, so great?" asked Ida, solemnly.

"To a man and a soldier," answered the Lieutenant, "it is but a common danger; but to a woman, soft, tender, luxuriously reared, loving and refined, it is an occasion of more than ordinary peril."

"You need not particularize," answered Ida, firmly. "Do not imagine that I have not heard of the well at Cawnpoor."

She put her left hand to her eyes, as if to shut out some spectacle of horror; and turning her head somewhat from him, held the palm of the right toward him, deprecatingly. It was a mute entreaty, too, to be silent on a subject that could but shock her.

"Naught, I suppose, happens by accident," said Kavanagh, looking very wishfully at that beseeching hand. He thought he should like to have that hand near him always; he thought it would be a good hand to look to for comfort and support; he thought it might be a hand that would never betray him. He wished he could make these opinions understood; yet knew not how he might venture on such delicate ground. So, instead of speaking, Neal Kavanagh's eyes went on a bashful pilgrimage from the hem of her garments to the dark line of her eyebrows; and still being afraid, traveled over the same pretty distance again.

There is something pleasing in a neat waist; there is a mute challenge to homage in well-fitted female frippery; there is a witchery, of its own kind, in a gracefully flowing skirt. But when we venture higher, to bust and eyes, and lips and locks, we are in, either for love or admiration. Add to the natural gifts of nature, and the natural deftness of feminine fingers, sweet and engaging manners, lofty aims and charming attainments, and an appreciated and cultivated young gentleman may as well strike his flag and surrender at once; for his shame is not in keeping the fortress of his heart, but in losing it; and his glory is his defeat.

Kavanagh wanted to say something to Ida. His heart was aching to say something; but he knew not how to approach that serene and saintly creature.

"The moon shines on the banyan-trees," said Kavanagh.

"Yes," said Ida.

"It has shone on them many centuries, Miss Ida."

"Yes," said Miss Macgregor.

"It's a good thing to have light from heaven," added Kavanagh, not well knowing what he was saying. "I mean, that sometimes the moonlight is very sweet."

Ida looked from the window into the balmy tropical night.

"I have thought," continued Kavanagh, "that man needs more light than that of the sun, or the moon, or the stars. There is a light that surpasses these. It is found in woman's eyes and in woman's love. Is it a foolish fancy, Miss Macgregor?"

"I should think not, Mr. Kavanagh," she answered.

"I feared you might," he added, exerting all his strength to keep his breath subdued, and where it ought to be. "It may be very foolish to talk of the moon and the light of woman's eyes. Vulgar and common people laugh about such things. I never did. I never could. Because I felt a prophecy that, among all the eyes that were in the world, there were two to beam on me. Was the thought absurd, Miss Macgregor?"

"No, Mr. Kavanagh."

The zodiacal lights flaunted up against the sky just then, and Ida fancied that they had something to say to her privately. The boreal flame was wondrously pleasant to look at; so she kept looking at it.

"If I were to find a woman whom I believe in my heart is to be my zodiacal light and should tell her of it, do you think that she would, or ought to be, angry with me?"

He gazed at Ida, and Ida gazed at the tropical lights.

"No, Mr. Kavanagh!" she faltered. Whether she was prompted by the tropical lights or the shimmering enchantment of the moon, nobody knows.

"May I understand your goodness?" he asked, in a voice that required a great deal of propping to keep it on exact equipoise.

"If it be goodness, yes, Mr. Kavanagh."

The two stood about three feet apart. They stood very still, too. It was to be wondered at that he did not drop on his knee, or seize her hand and devour it and adore it. He did not; he stood bolt upright, like a soldier. There was a humid appearance in the horizon of his eyes; there was a slight quivering and twitching of the muscles of the face; and the blood went down toward the citadel, leaving the cheeks rather whiter than usual; and that was about the most that could be made of it.

His chest wasn't quite right, it's true, because it hurried and forced his respiration; but his heart didn't stop beating, nor his blood stop flowing, as it had flowed for some twenty-five years.

"Miss Macgregor, I know not what to say. This must be some trick of that drop of poison. Is it possible, Miss Macgregor, that I am understood?"

"Yes, Mr. Kavanagh."

The zodiacal light so flamed into Ida's eyes that she closed them to keep it out. There was not much color in her face. She was of a pure white, from her forehead to her chin. She gasped slightly, and occasional tremors moved her arms, like little spasms or waves of motion.

"I am no longer ill!" said Kavanagh, huskily. "I am well! I never was so well in my life. This is a sweet wound. I glory in it. What can I offer in return for this bliss?"

He reverently took her hand.

"Mr. Kavanagh," answered Ida, thrillingly, "in return, you shall grant me one thing when I ask it. Should that happen which we fear, do not let me fall, alive, into the hands of the Sepoys. When all is lost, and I turn to you, and clasp my hands in this manner"—she clasped her hands—"give me a quick and easy death! This will be enough. This will send me back to Him as I left Him."

"I do not know," said Kavanagh, deeply moved, "that I can do this; but if it be in the power of man, I will not hesitate."

"O Mr. Kavanagh, it is in the power of man! He who can slay a tiger to preserve my life, can slay me to preserve my honor."

Her face gathered something from the zodiacal lights; for its purity was very beautiful.

"Should I see the horror, immediate, instant, irremediable, I will destroy the sweetest temple that ever human spirit inhabited! But, Ida, the death that follows thine, first and speediest will be mine!"

Miss Macgregor, who had withdrawn her hand, extended it again to Kavanagh. He accepted it as if it were the mystic key that was to unlock his future and reveal all there was before him of life. With that key in his hand, he saw the zodiac through her eyes, looking very hopeful and very bright. He thought he should be content to see always with her eyes, and to live in the light of them.

It was very silent outside. The swarthy Sepoys stood at their several posts. Barna-

bas Hutton went his rounds, faithful to his own nature, faithful to those within. The tall, straight palm threw lengthened shadows on the slumbering grass; the gigantic, spreading, and many-trunked banyan stretched its sheltering arms motionless over the breathless foliage; the slender and graceful bamboos stood out like spears in the sluggish air.

The night went on, following many other nights of danger. The night went on in doubt, yet in quietude and safety. Neal Kavanagh never knew a night like it. Ida Macgregor never knew a night like it. A great many nights come and go in one's life, but few of them are peaceful and happy, and leave not something to regret. The early love-nights, however, are good; for the heart is then earnest, the desires simple, and the mind pure.

Kavanagh and Ida watched the zodiacal lights, and the dusky Sepoys, and Barnabas on his elephant, till it was very late. They experienced a calm and solemn happiness, new, bewildering, and ineffable.

CHAPTER XVIII.

UPAS.

The light of morning brought relief to the household of Major Rainbold. Each felt thankful that nothing dreadful had occurred. The native soldiers only manifested dissatisfaction; they were sullen; they ate their food in sullenness; they drank in sullenness; they answered questions sullenly. Alethe said they talked much of the American; that they looked at him much, was certain; that they scowled at him, was equally true. When Barnabas approached them (which he often did during the day), they were seen to stealthily lay hands on their weapons and look dangerous.

The same disposition was made of them the following night, and Barnabas Hutton and Methuselah went the rounds as before. The four native servants, in the first of the evening, walked about the grounds with seeming carelessness; but Hutton quickly put an end to it.

"My dusky boys," said he, advancing upon them as they stood in a group under a peepul-tree, "go to your quarters."

They murmured, and turning their backs on him, fingered their daggers; for that day they had thrust daggers into their belts.

"Go to your quarters," repeated Barnabas, "I'm cap'n here to-night. Everything is in my hands; that bungalow is in my hands; the people in it are in my hands; the people outside on't are in my hands, and you are in my hands. Go to your kennels, curs."

Hutton stood by his elephant, leaning against him, with his right arm around his enormous leg. The big trunk of Methuselah waved over him like a flag.

One of the servants made an insulting remark. Barnabas drew a pistol and shot him dead. The thing was done so quietly, yet with so much firmness, that the remaining three were astounded.

Methuselah (wise old beast) strangely in sympathy with his master, sharing his excitement and entering into his justice, coiled his long, lithe trunk around the nearest native, and crushed his ribs with a single contraction. The poor wretch, with one stifled wail of agony, dropped lifeless from the embrace of Methuselah.

"It's a good thing, old boy. It might as well be done now as ever. Strike in, old 'un; strike in! What's the use? It must happen, sooner or later, and there's them yender that is worth a thousand of 'em—yes, a good thousand of 'em. Take 'em, Methuselah; take 'em."

Hutton raised his voice and struck the elephant with his hand. The omnipotent trunk went up like lightning; it descended as swiftly, alighting on the head of one of the sullen serfs, and he never knew what hurt him. The other, with a howl, ran away.

"It can't be helped," muttered Hutton, "I'm the last man to do it without provocation; yes, I am. I know what it's for. I know who and what it's to save. Dear me, what comfort there is in doin' good service to them as you like! Lord! Lord! I wish Methuselah could have a slap at all of 'em. To think o' murderin' a pretty white woman! To think o' more nor that."

Honest Barnabas wound his arm around Methuselah's trunk, and went on with him in friendly companionship. There is no

doubt but they both felt fond of each other. If Methuselah had pride in Hutton's intelligence, Hutton had pride in Methuselah's strength and mightiness. It was not an unpleasant sight to see them walking together in the moonlight. The confidence of the one and the magnanimity of the other were things not to be slighted. Strength and weakness fraternize very comfortably.

Barnabas was too good-natured not to regret the necessity of taking life; but the sacrifice seemed imperative. The killing of a native, under the circumstances surrounding him, he considered a duty rather than a crime.

The one had fled—had gone into the jungle—and it was useless to pursue him. Luckily for Barnabas, this scene transpired very quietly, and at a point where the Sepoys could not witness it. Had they seen the transaction, the catastrophe would have been hastened. As it was, they remained in discontented obedience at their posts, staring moodily at Barnabas as he went by, to return again in the same orbit, with the same watchfulness, and at the same pace.

"Sahib!" cried a voice.

Barnabas, who was now seated on Methuselah, stopped and looked in every direction, but could not discover the author of the voice.

"Sahib!"

"Who speaks? Where are you?" asked Barnabas, still at a loss.

"Look this way, Sahib."

Hutton, guided by the sounds, cast his eyes upward, and beheld a figure perched on a branch of a banyan-tree. This startled him. The thought that every bough might bear such fruit, gave him an unpleasant realization of the craft and subtlety of the natives. To pull out his revolver was his first act.

"What you doin' up there?" he demanded, suspiciously.

"I am sitting on a limb, Sahib."

The answer was prompt, and the voice very comfortably careless.

"I see you're settin' on a limb, and you make a mighty nice mark for one's six-shooter. I s'pose you don't know that natyves aint safe settin' on limbs."

Barnabas cocked his revolver.

"It depends altogether on the motive, Sahib," replied the man, as coolly as before.

"I'm goin' to shoot pretty soon," said Barnabas; "which way would you like to fall—head first, or heels first?"

Hutton waited, mildly and patiently, for the person in the tree to decide this question.

"Were I to fall in the way you hint at, it would make no manner of difference whether the heels or the head took precedence. But I know, Sahib, that you will not shoot."

"Any bits o' brass about you that you'd like to wager on that pint? If you'll put up anything worth while, I'll run the risk o' losin' about a fourth of a lac o' rupees," returned Barnabas, quite as much at his ease as the individual on the limb.

"I am not a betting man, Sahib," said the latter. "And besides, I haven't as many rupees as would buy a measure of rice or a half-ounce of opium."

"All this has nothin' whatever to do with me. If you don't come down, I shall have to fetch ye down; not bein' a man as is given to jestin' and nonsense. Who are you, natyve?"

"I am Tilac, the tiger-tamer," was the reply.

"Oh, you're Tilac, the tiger-tamer, be ye? Sorry to say I never heer'd on ye afore in my life. Never did. No!"

"That's very curious, Sahib," returned the native, dropping from his perch directly upon Methuselah's head.

"Familiarity, Mister Tilac, is some'at that I don't fancy on short acquaintance. You jest slide off o' this critter suddint, or you'll never tame another tiger, big nor little, as long as you live! You won't. No!"

Barnabas doubled a hand which made a fist about the size of a child's head, and made a free exhibition of it to Tilac.

Instead of complying, Tilac turned a backward summerset over Hutton's head, and alighted skilfully behind him.

"E pluribus!" exclaimed Barnabas. "That's what I call a-gile! But don't throw yourself round too much. I'd rather you'd be some'at scarce than too plenty. I choose to ride alone; so jest flop down where I can put the axes o' my eyes on you."

Throwing another summerset back to Methuselah's head, Tilac slid lightly over one of the great ears to the ground.

Barnabas, now having him more fully under observation, noticed that he was dressed in blue and white cotton stuff. His turban was of the same material. His face had various devices painted upon it. On one cheek was represented a tigress and her whelps; on the other, the head of a cobra-capello rising from the petals of an Indian lily. His forehead was striped with red and white. His teeth and lips were stained bright red by chewing betel-leaf, a bag of which hung at his side. He wore a small, crooked dagger in a serpent-skin sheath.

Since his residence in India, Barnabas had not encountered so singular a figure. He examined him leisurely, and taxed his American shrewdness to fix him somewhere in the catalogue of human character.

"So you are Tilac, the tiger-tamer?" said Barnabas, reflecting.

"Tiger-tamer and snake-charmer, both, Sahib," replied Tilac, salaaming.

"That's right; glad you've found your manners. Like to have natyves keep doin' so, when they're talkin' with their betters. Charm snakes and tame tigers, eh? Couldn't you add some'at else to your business, to fill up the gaps?"

"I have as much as I can do, Sahib. I tame tigers for Europeans, and I charm snakes for the amusement of anybody who will throw me a bit of silver."

"The tigers may do well enough, but eat the snakes! I allers had a principle agin snakes. They're riptyles as is nasty and disagreeable, and produces a crawlin' in the naryves, and a creepin' of the flesh, and a coldness of the blood. I'd thank ye, Mister Tilac, to bring me no serpents. And as for that paintin' on your face, Hindu, it is heathenish and not accordin' to natur. It isn't. No! You natyves look bad enough with clean faces; but come to put on wild animiles, snakes' heads, and red and white streaks, it's little short o' diabolical. Now, Mister Tilac, what do you want?"

Hutton put the question that concluded his remarks with an earnestness not to be trifled with.

"I want to sell you a tiger, Sahib," answered Tilac, with a profound salaam.

"Keep 'em to sell, do ye? Shouldn't wonder if you had a stock of 'em round here, somewheres. It must be a snug and pretty business! Got your life insured, Mister Tilac?"

"Sahib, I have a most splendid creature to show you. It has eyes like a woman's."

"The very reason why I shouldn't want it. Is its tongue like a woman's, natyve?"

"It's coat shines like burnished steel. You may caress it as you would caress a girl. It will be to you as a child."

"Children and girls I know little about," replied Hutton. "Go your way. I want no tigers."

"Sahib, you cannot resist my animal. You can stroke her back, and she will rub her head against you like a tame kitten. Neglect not this opportunity, O Sahib. It is a golden chance, that may never again occur."

Tilac whistled, then called:

"Upas! Upas!"

Immediately there was a rustling in the foliage, and a magnificent creature alighted at Tilac's feet. Even the phlegmatic American could not but confess to its surpassing beauty. He gazed at it with admiring eyes, while it arose on its hinder feet to receive the caresses of its master.

"Upas! Upas! I must part with thee, Upas. I need rupees more than thee, beautiful one."

He stroked the glossy head, and stooped to feel her breath on his face.

"E pluribus!" muttered Hutton, charmed in spite of himself. "It's a handsome beast, Mister Tilac," he added.

"Beast, Sahib! Call not my glorious beauty a beast. Call her rather a princess, or a proud and dazzling woman," answered Tilac, impetuously.

"Not a bad idea, tiger-tamer. You're a poet as well as a charmer, I see."

Hutton looked anxiously toward the bungalow, and the various points where the Sepoys were watching.

"You wish to go your rounds, Sahib. Go, and I will wait your return," said Tilac, noticing his uneasiness.

This being the thing Barnabas intended to do, he instantly passed on, and finding all safe, was soon back again; for the tiger had taken hold of his imagination.

"Upas! Upas!" said Barnabas.

The tiger flashed at him and growled.

"You see that never'll do, Hindu. She'd scratch my eyes out quicker'n winkin'!" Hutton stared at Upas a minute, and said, with an involuntary shiver:

"Git out you cat. Scat!"

"Speak her gently, Sahib! She's like a woman. Give her flattery and sweetmeats, and she is easily won. An evil look or a cross word stirs her temper. I know, Sahib, that you will be pleased with her. I will teach you, so you shall do with her just as you see me do."

"Keep her out o' the way of the elephant, Mister Tilac, or she'll git a sly dab, first thing you know. One fillip of that careless piece o' gristle would spile her beauty. He wants to git hold of her the worst way."

"Keep your fine animal still, and Upas shall jump up beside you, and you shall touch her shining skin, and her soft paws, and look into her burning eyes."

Without giving Barnabas time to assent or dissent, Tilac spoke to Upas and made a gesture. Instantly the tigress sprang up beside Hutton, who evinced a great deal of distrust and shrinking. But Upas appeared entirely docile, fawned upon him, and solicited his attention by many graceful advances. Barnabas was more than pleased; he was delighted. As the splendid creature rubbed her head against him, he could not, for the life of him, help thinking of Alethe. If he looked into her eyes, he thought of Alethe; if he touched her velvet skin, he thought of Alethe; even the hot breath of Upas on his cheeks, made him think of Alethe. It was singular that this should be true; but it was as true as singular.

Barnabas grew interested. Upas wooed him more effectually than Tilac. Had Upas begun with him, and her master held his tongue, he would have been won. They manifestly, were friends in a moment.

"What a cat it is!" murmured Barnabas.

"What a fine dog it is! What an affectionate little gal! It is. Yes! I never! I don't believe anybody ever!"

"It's a companion fit for a king," said Tilac, proudly. "Sahib, you have the finest elephant in India, and you will soon own the finest tiger. O Buddha! Who could not be happy with such an elephant and such a tiger!"

Upas placed a paw on Hutton's shoulder, and gently sunk her muzzle till it rested beside it.

"Takin' aim at some'at, isn't she? Why do you call her Upas? Isn't that a deadly sort of handle to tack onto a pretty kitten like this?"

"I call her Upas, Sahib, because I found her stupefied within the deadly circle of the Bohun Upas. I took her in my arms and bore her hence, gasping, and nearly dead myself with the fatal exhalations of the malignant tree. She was then a glossy baby, a helpless yet charming little creature, that nestled to my heart like a child. I warmed her upon my breast. I breathed into her, as it were, the breath of life; her being grew out of mine. Do you marvel, Sahib, that I love her? The name of Upas is a good and suggestive one; it tells you what she was by nature, fierce and terrible; and what she is by human fellowship and kindness, gentle and affectionate."

Tilac crossed his hands on his bosom, and sighed heavily.

"Why do you part with her?" asked Barnabas.

"It is my business," answered Tilac, "to train them and to part with them. I would fain have kept Upas; but the fates forbid. All my friends and relatives have been slain by the English soldiers because they mixed with this rebellion. I, also, must fly for my life. The British, Sahib, will be victorious. We shall be hunted down like beasts. I must go hence. No matter where I go, if the distance be far; but far it must be. I cannot take my beautiful Upas. She must be confided to some one. Stranger, I confide her to you. Use her well. If I ever come for her, yield her back to me; if I do not, she is yours. Offer me no rupees; I will not take them. I scorn rupees for my tiger. When I spoke of rupees, it was but a device

to try you. Can you buy beauty, and glory, and strength, and fidelity, for rupees! Tilac, the tiger-tamer, knows better. She is easily controlled. Give her your love, and she will give you hers. The only secret of her management is, kindness. Upas"—he addressed the tigress—"stay till I come for you. Go with him. Don't leave him. Nay, girl, don't look wishfully at me! Don't whimper, my girl! Don't look sad, my child! We may sometime meet again. Farewell, Sahib—farewell, my glorious Upas!"

With these words, hurriedly and feelingly pronounced, Tilac, the tiger-tamer, darted into the jungle and disappeared.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE BURNING-EYED AND THE DREAMY-EYED.

Neal Kavanagh, with a sword across his knees and a revolver in his hand, sat, awaiting anxiously the events of the night. The Major, similarly armed, occupied an apartment on the opposite side of the bungalow, a prey to the same fears and feelings. Kavanagh could hear, at intervals, the slow and heavy tread of the elephant, as, guided by Barnabas, he made the circuit of the house. Notwithstanding the excitement he had endured the past day and night, strange to say, his wound did not suffer by it, nor was there any recurrence of the feverish symptoms. The thought of Miss Macgregor might have acted as an anodyne; soothing the turmoil of his mind and counteracting the effects of apprehension.

Now and then, shading his eyes with his hand, he looked out upon the dim and silent grounds, which, hour after hour, still remained dim and silent.

A light scratch upon the floor, a muffled sound, a footfall that was like the tread of an ambushed cat, caused Kavanagh to look toward the door. The first objects he beheld were two shining lights, like two spheres of glass, with lightning shining through them.

Those two shining lights drew and kept his consciousness for a moment—they were so brilliant, so unexpected, and so wonderful. Breaking from this fascination with a soldier's promptness, he took cognizance of more than a pair of intense eyes. He perceived a nearly full-grown tiger looking him in the face! There was more of curiosity than fierceness in the sleek and shining creature's expression. It seemed doubtful whether to advance or retreat. It looked as if a kind word would bring it to his feet. He knew at once that the animal must be tame; but he had never seen it before, and wondered whence it came. Its beauty and grace reminded him of an elegant woman.

He tried to feel that he was a soldier, and said, with tolerable firmness:

"Come here, my beauty; come here!"

Like a prudent man however, Neal Kavanagh cocked his revolver, not fully assured of the intentions of his magnificent visitor.

"All right!" said a good-humored voice. "E pluribus, my boy! Or, as they have it on the copper cents in the States, E Pluribus Unanimous."

Barnabas Hutton, who had modestly stood a little back, out of sight, now advanced into the room with Upas.

"You came near giving me a fright, Barnabas," said Kavanagh. "If I hadn't been an English soldier, I believe I should have fainted, like a schoolgirl. What have you got hold of now, my friend?"

"You can see for yourself, Lieutenant. It's a Hindu arrangement altogether. A sentimental, picture-painted native philanthropically slapped it onto me a short time ago. Better nor a dog, isn't she? You mustn't say 'scat' to her howsoever. Scat don't 'pear to 'gree with her. You know the kind o' gammon that goes down the feminines, don't ye, Lieutenant?" Barnabas stretched his good-natured mouth into a smile that divided his face into two sections. "Scat a woman, and see what'll come on't! Scat a woman, and see if it'll be E pluribus! Well, this mincin' critter is powerfully similar. She is. Yes!"

"You astonish me, Barnabas? Are you sure that this animal's perfectly safe?" replied Kavanagh, unconsciously pushing his chair back as Hutton drew near.

"To tell you the plain truth, my boy, I shouldn't be the least mite surprised if that varmint should spring right onto ye, and tear

ye all to bits. I shouldn't. No! On the contrary, Lieutenant, I rather come in as an experiment than otherwise. If the animal isn't docile, I want to know it before she does much mischief, you know. If she pulls you apart, 'twouldn't be like tacklin' one o' the gals. It wouldn't. No. We could duplicate your mug well enough, but you couldn't the mugs o' them gals. Rat me if you could! All mugs isn't the same mugs, you're aweer," said Mr. Hutton.

"I appreciate your motive, Barnabas, but I can't look upon it as a favor. Take away this lithe and agile beauty, with her opal eyes. She don't agree with me, I'm afraid," answered Kavanagh, eyeing Upas distrustfully.

"The whole secret," added Barnabas, "lies in a nutshell. You're to speak softly, smile tender, and stroke her head gentle; which does the business. Leastways, it has so far; but God He only knows how long 'twill last! To own up, E pluribus, I'm expectin' every minute to be plowed up from head to foot, like a cow-pastur' in the States. I be. Yes!"

Barnabas squinted at his new piece of property with more doubt than confidence; then, with evident uncertainty, said:

"Come to your perpriotor, Upas. Come, you mag-ni-fish-ent she!"

Contrary to the expectations of Kavanagh, the tigress went and rubbed against Hutton's legs.

"Pluribus Rex!" quoth Barnabas. "Isn't it a gammonin' kitten?"

"It is singularly tame," observed Kavanagh. "How came it in your possession?"

"A Hindu interprise," replied Barnabas. "Tilac, the tiger-tamer. Painted natyve. Menagerum on one cheek and pizen snakes on tother. Blue and white cotton. Legs struck into blue and white cotton. Buddy pushed into blue and white cotton. Blue and white cotton head. Red teeth. Stripes on his forehead. Found baby-tigress in valley of Bohun Upas, stupefied. Took it home and renovated it. Took a mighty likin' for it. Goin' away. Sentimental cuss. Give her to me. Scuttled into the jungle. And that's the whole story. Took her up here to interduce her, and see what you thought on't; though I'll be dod-ratted if I didn't think it was about an even chance that she'd chew your 'tother arm. Bless my body, what furrers she'd turn with them ere fish-hooks of hers at the eend of her legs! Durned if I know what to do with her. Rather a wounded sight, the gen'rous cuss had give me a small farm, with a few acres o' mowin'. I would. Yes! I'd like to turn my property into ready money soon's convenient, I vow!"

Barnabas turned his twinkling eyes on Upas, with an expression exceedingly problematical.

"I never was a durned miser," he returned, in a genial glow. "I never wanted to freeze to more nor belonged to me. I allers liked you, my boy; and I've no doubt but I should liked your folks accordin', if I'd known 'em; on account of which, as a small momentum of my esteem, and as a sovereign of my friendship, 'low me to persent you this here—"

"No, no, my dear Barnabas!" interposed Kavanagh, greatly alarmed. "Don't make such a sacrifice."

"No sacrifice at all, and it's a luxury I can well afford to part with," responded Barnabas, with a comical twitching of the corners of his mouth. "It was the wish of the generous cuss who donated the property to me, that it might forever remain in the country; but I think o' movin', my boy; I think on't serious, and I don't care to take my riches with me."

"All of which," laughed Kavanagh, "I fully appreciate, and beg of you to accept every expression of gratitude you can conveniently think of. I hope the time may come when I may be able to repay this kindness."

Just then the tigress, with exceeding grace and persuasiveness, looked up at Barnabas.

"Well! well! I don't know!" he muttered. "This is a trifle beyond my facilities. There may be some'at in this varmint. Who knows? Upas, my beauty, are you a true gal, or a dazzlin' hypocrite?" He patted the creature on the head; she seemed infinitely pleased. While he was doing this, a shadow fell on the floor. It was not a large shadow, but a symmetrical one; and Barnabas recog-

nized it. He knew the turn of the shoulders; the carriage of the head; the smallness of the waist. The shadow said, "Alethe"; and Alethe it was.

Barnabas turned from the shadow to the substance. People who have been in love know how quickly this is done. It don't take long; and Barnabas beheld, in an instant, the dreamy maiden of his thoughts. He saw her as he had never seen her before. Alethe stood on the threshold, with face so pale that it was whiter than Ida's; with lips slightly apart; with nostrils dilated; with eyes glazed and fixed, and her slight and sylphlike figure thrown forward in an attitude of wonder.

Both Kavanagh and Hutton changed at once in mood. The mute earnestness of the girl made them immediately forgetful of themselves and their conversation. They waited for her to speak. She could not at once, it was manifest, command her voice; but presently the hesitating organs obeyed the will. Raising an interrogatory finger, she pointed at the tigress.

"Mr. Barnabas! Mr. Barnabas!" she gasped. "How came that creature here?"

"She walked right along on her trotters," answered Hutton. "There isn't much doubt about her style o' travelin'."

"Where did you get her?" queried Alethe—her pallor not yet subsiding.

"A generous cuss persented her to me, without fee, recompense, or reward—a prodigal son, Miss 'Lethe, a wastin' his substance."

"A perilous gift! It is the gift of death. This creature has but one will; and that is the will of her master, who exercises over her a secret power. Mr. Barnabas, its name is Upas; and it is as deadly to its master's enemies as that tree to the human race."

"It don't look dangerous," said Barnabas, glancing down at Upas with obvious distrust. "Don't you see it's nothin' but a kitten, Miss 'Lethe? There isn't nothin' cross into her. There isn't. No! Observe how she puts up her mug to be noticed. 'Twould be a pretty lapdog for a lady. Shouldn't wonder if I was to give her to you, one these days. Rat me, if you wouldn't be a nice couple!"

"Alethe," said Kavanagh, "your manner and words are startling. Tell us what you know of this animal."

"The girl clapped her hands, and said: 'Upas! Upas!'"

The tigress turned quickly, and went to her. Instantly, she began to caress her. Kavanagh noticed that she looked straight into the animal's eyes, manipulating the glossy head with her hands with a continuous backward motion. The bright orbs at first flamed with excitement, but gradually softened till they were gentle as a woman's. Neither Hutton nor the Lieutenant interrupted her. Upas grew meek and submissive. With a sigh, she stretched herself at Alethe's feet, and presently, closing her now tender eyes, dropped asleep.

"Are you seein' that?" asked Barnabas, who was by this time in a high state of admiration. "Are you seein' that, Lieutenant? Isn't she a witch, my boy?"

"She has witching ways, I confess," responded Kavanagh, smiling—yet not much less surprised than his friend.

"That piece of property," added Hutton, "grows more valuable. Tigers was low an hour ago; but they'll be E pluribus by mornin'."

"Mr. Barnabas," said Alethe, sweetly, "will you leave Upas to me?"

"In my first and last will and testament, I'll leave her to ye, willin'. I'll give you a quit-claim deed, to have and to hold, to keep and to cultivate, now and forever, you and your heirs and assigns, and so on and so forth—all accordin' to law and in due form—the tigress above and the tigress aforesaid being repeated some forty times; or, at least, often enough to make the whole thing a durned puzzle to anybody of common-sense. Yet hold on a bit, Brownie. If there's any danger in that animile; if there's any animosity in that cub; if there's any scratch and bite in that kitten; if there's any rare and tear in that shiny beauty—I wouldn't leave it in your possession, or alone with it, for all the pearls in Ingy."

Hutton's countenance grew serious as he went on:

"If there's any trick about this; if there's any Hindu cunnin' at the bottom on't; if

there's any infarnal craft at the beginnin', or middle, or eend on't—jest let me know it. Speak out, my little gal; open your sweet mouth, my pet. Don't go for to takin' all the risk o' this business on your own pretty shoulders; don't go for to exposin' yourself for me, or him, or her, or for anybody. 'If you expose yourself, expose yourself for yourself."

If Mr. Hutton's elephant had been present, it is probable that Mr. Hutton's elephant wouldn't have known Mr. Hutton's elephant's master. Methuselah's proprietor was, in truth, so much elevated, and so carried away in the rush and tumble of his feelings, that his face glowed like a preacher's, and his hands flailed about like a thresher's.

Kavanagh, in his surprise, allowed his sword to slip off his knees and fall to the floor.

Alethe did not manifest much wonder at his eloquence; she was prepared to see, not only eloquence, but many other qualities. Averting her eyes, she answered, in a modest manner:

"Do not be afraid, Mr. Barnabas. I know this creature. I held her in my arms when she was no larger than a cat. I know wherein she is weak and wherein she is strong. I can subdue her. I trust not Upas with you, Mr. Barnabas. It has been taught to be furious at certain sounds. Let her master but make those sounds in her hearing, and she will lash the ground with her tail, and, shuddering, go into a rage. It may be fear that seizes her; it may be natural ferocity, stirred by signals she has been trained to understand. It is not craft that makes her fawn on you and seek caresses; it is the tenderness of her disposition, humanized by companionship with man. Like the dog, she loves notice; like the dog, she courts a friendly gleam of the eye; like the dog, she derives her happiness from the kindness of her master."

Kavanagh listened to Alethe, more than half fascinated, himself, by her sense and modesty. If there was ever to be a moment dangerous to the love of Ida, that was the moment. He waited impatiently for her to lift her fairy eyes, that he might look into them. Did he think of the Major? Was there aught in that lovely face to remind him of the Major? Other questions followed fast after these. Was she known in this household? Did she know herself? Had she grown up in the family? Had her history been a secret? Had her life been a happy one?

All these queries passed through Kavanagh's brain while he was waiting for the young girl to raise her drooping eyes from the slumbering tigress.

"Queer country!" muttered Barnabas. "Nothin' straight and open. Everybody mixed up with everybody. Thug, gal, Kavanagh; gals, tiger, Kavanagh; Hydrabad, Kavanagh, gal; elephant, gal, Hutton—that's me—anecdote and Kavanagh; Tilac, tiger, and gal agin; and if I can read the human countenance, more Kavanagh sprinkled in. All right, I s'pose, but plaguy mysterious; all E pluribus, but wounded strange!"

The softest shade of jealousy went over Hutton's face. It didn't last long; he was too generous to be unjust more than a few moments at a time.

"Keep Upas, my pretty," he added, in a genial tone, "but don't, for Heaven's sake, let her git the upper hands. She'd be nigh about as hard to manage as a Seboy, if she should git the advantage. There's one as can master her, howsoever, in case she can't forget what's been drummed into her by that generous cuss. Tiger-tamers, in futur', better keep out o' my path, or they'll git a cast from Methuselah that'll pitch him into o-blivion. You'd better lock the little dear up, 'Lethe. She's wholesomer, I guess, under key."

"I'll take care of her, Mr. Barnabas."

She touched Upas lightly, pronouncing her name in a soothing tone. "Come, Upas, come!"

The tigress arose and, yawning sleepily, followed the girl from the apartment.

Barnabas looked after her with adoring eyes.

The Dreamy-Eyed and the Burning-Eyed looked wondrously graceful as they departed.

CHAPTER XX.

TILAC.

"Major Rainbold," said Barnabas, presenting himself abruptly to that gentleman, whose

eyes were watchfully fixed on such portions of his grounds as could be commanded from a single window, "three of your sarvants will never run away."

"Have you sounded them?" asked the Major.

"Right down to the quick! There's no mischief in them three, and you needn't fear 'em. But the fourth run away; and what he'll do, I don't know."

"What do you mean, Mr. Hutton?"

"I shot one through the head, and the other two fell under the blows of Methuselah," replied Barnabas.

"Dead, eh? Well, Mr. Hutton, I shall not question your judgment. What is the prospect? I am growing unspeakably weary of this suspense. Barnabas, let us decide this at once. Why submit longer to the hypocrisy of those villains yonder? Demme, Sir, let's go out and shoot 'em down! You are well armed, and so am I. I am tired of this childish business. It's not becoming a British officer and a brave gentleman."

Major Rainbold slapped himself upon the knee, and was undeniably too much in earnest to be trifled with.

"Major," answered Barnabas, "it isn't them six that we're afeard on; it's the dozen, or twenty, or thirty, as the case may be, that are hid in the jungle, waitin' to be in at the death, to plunder, to steal, and to pillage."

"We must anticipate 'em! Demme, Sir, we must anticipate 'em! We musn't wait for 'em to give the signal. That's folly, Sir, demme! Why should we wait to be massacred?"

The Major sprang from his seat, really angry.

Kavanagh came in.

"If I's to ventur' an opinion, Major, I shouldn't disagree with ye," replied Hutton.

"But there's one important thing to be considered; before twenty-four hours, there's no doubt in my mind but your bungalow will be in ashes. As you've said, we must anticipate 'em. We can't stay in a bungalow that's burnt down; therefore we must go somewhere else. Now where shall we go? Do you know of any hidin'-place? Is there a jungle in Ingy thick enough to hide us from the rebels till times are safer. We've all thought on't; you've thought on't, and I've thought on't, and he's thought on't; and now we've got to act on't."

"This is all true," said Kavanagh. "Secret and instant flight is the only thing that is left to us. Unless the Major is well acquainted with the country, we need a trusty guide; but I doubt if such a thing can be found among the servants."

"There's no sarvants left but women and children, and they bein' natives, have nothin' to be afeard on. But there's 'Lethe! I shouldn't be surprised if 'Lethe could tell us where to go. She might guide us up among the hills, leastways, where we got the cure for the p'ison."

Just then a shrill whistle from the elephant reached them, and Barnabas immediately rushed from the house. The Major and Kavanagh followed him.

Barnabas ran around the bungalow in search of Methuselah. He found him with his trunk elevated, and evidently alarmed. The cause of his excitement was a clear, red blaze crawling up the bamboo wall toward the dry thatch on the roof. Hutton immediately scrambled to his back, how, he could not afterward remember.

He perceived that there was no use in trying to quench the fire, which was fast enveloping that part of the building.

The native soldiers were uppermost in his mind; they were the proper objects of attention. Encouraging Methuselah, inciting him to anger by every means in his power, he sought the authors of this mischief.

A volley of musketry informed him with too much certainty where to look for the Seboys. A bullet struck the scabbard of his sword, giving him a smart shock and a slight fleshwound; and others appeared to strike the elephant; who, with a cry like a trumpet, rushed upon the aggressors. Methuselah, to look at, was a vast, unwieldy mass; but that mass was capable of terrific emotion and it is emotion that imparts action, speed, quickness, intelligence, revenge.

The natives were as much surprised at the suddenness of the onset as if they had lived in a country where elephants were rarely seen. The smoke of their muskets partly concealed his coming; nor were they aware

of their danger till his sharp whistle sounded almost over their heads. Instead of running, they presented their bayonets mechanically, more than from a belief that such a demonstration would be available. In their consternation, they did not remember the wonderful pliability of the animal's trunk, and the nearly human calculation that guided it. To wind that lithe arm around the barrel of a musket, drag its owner to the ground, and trample on him, was the work of a few seconds. To repeat the operation, consumed, if possible, less time; while a third, seeing with horror the fate of his companions, and dropping his weapon to fly, was stricken upon the neck and died.

Kavanagh, who had by this time arrived, shot a fourth with his revolver, the Major wounded a fifth, and the sixth fled, uninjured.

Without exchanging a word, they mutually turned to the burning dwelling. Kavanagh could do but little toward extinguishing the flames; he therefore hastened to the servants' quarters, and very soon a dozen native women came hurrying to the spot, bearing pails of water, which they dashed upon the flames with little or no effect.

It was at this trying juncture that the faithfulness and kindness of the sex were displayed. Real terror and anxiety were depicted upon their faces. If they had had their wishes, their false and truant lords would have been brought back to obedience. Aided by these devoted women, the Major and Barnabas worked a long time, but without quelling the fire, which, communicating with the thatch on the roof, spread rapidly. The smoke arose in dense, black columns. With feelings of sorrow, Rainbold saw that nothing could be done to save the structure.

While this conflict with the destroying element was going on, Melicent's door was burst open, she was seized by the waist, and borne from the house. She cried for help; but her cries were at first overpowered by the roaring of the fire, and finally smothered by the hand of the person who was hurrying her away. She was placed on horseback, and a man immediately mounted behind her. The latter she did not see distinctly. The dimness of night, and the smoke driving into her face, together with her own terrors, prevented her from seeing objects clearly.

The suddenness of the proceeding, the quick realization of her misfortune, each and both served to bewilder her. For the space of five or ten minutes, she was not fully conscious of what was transpiring; yet the one great overwhelming certainty, that she was in the power of a pitiless enemy, was ever present.

Ida Macgregor awoke from a brief repose to discover her room filled with smoke, and every instant flowing in. Throwing open the door, she called loudly to Melicent and Alethe, and rushed wildly into the open air. She was met by Kavanagh, who made the best use of his uninjured arm, by throwing it around her, and urging her toward the stables.

Alethe, who had taken the tigress to her chamber, had been more vigilant than Melicent or Ida. She soon detected the smell of fire, but she was not one to be easily frightened. From her little window she could see the flames quivering, and hissing, and mounting upward. She was assured that Barnabas would come for her, when it became necessary to fly from the burning edifice. So strong was this faith, that she sat perfectly quiet, with Upas sleeping at her feet.

The smoke became quite thick and stifling; the air grew hot and unfit for respiration. Upas moved uneasily, trembled, and moaned. The pungent air penetrated her nostrils, and irritated her lungs. Alethe was thinking seriously that she was overlooked or forgotten, when her door was pushed open and some one burst in. It was not Barnabas. She expected to see Barnabas. But what a different figure, face, and expression presented! A man, clad in blue and white, with painted visage, and a curved dagger at his side, was before her. It was Tilac, the tiger-tamer.

He paused not, but advanced upon Alethe. "Stop!" cried the girl, menacingly. "You are near enough for good fellowship."

"Who can be too near to thee, O star of the morning!" answered Tilac.

"Begone!" added Alethe, resolutely. "If you advance, it is at your own risk."

"Nay, fair Alethe," said Tilac, in a persuasive voice, "the pain is in being too far from you."

"You shall change that opinion before you leave me," replied Alethe.

"Lily of India," said Tilac, earnestly, "those who approach you can have but one mind. All the treasures of Golconda were nothing to thee. O glory of the world!"

"As neither the treasures of Golconda nor I are for thee, go thy way quickly, O Tilac."

The tiger-tamer started with surprise.

"What did you say?" he asked. "Did you speak of one that you know?"

"I seldom speak of those I do not know. This air is getting too thick to be breathed. Tiger-tamer, you had better go!" retorted Alethe, firmly.

"I will go; but you shall go with me."

Tilac darted forward to seize her. She retreated, exclaiming, vehemently:

"Upas! Upas!"

She still retreated; she repeated:

"Upas! Upas!"

The tigress sprang up at the sound of her voice; she looked at Alethe, then taking her meaning from her eyes and agitated voice, and goaded on by the smoke, Upas turned, hot and angry, on Tilac. The creature had been sleeping in a corner of the apartment, nor had she been observed by Tilac; but now that she suddenly uprose and confronted him, the effect was most extraordinary; and he staggered backward, incredulous yet terrified.

Was this the docile, obedient animal he had parted with but a short time before? What had transformed her? Was it indeed the same submissive, sagacious creature? There could be no question about the matter. Had not Alethe called her Upas? Would it not be remarkable for two tigers to be called Upas? He recognized the superb head, the resplendent eyes, the glossy skin, the graceful form, undulating and quivering with strength and fierceness.

Would she forget his ministering hand? Would she forget their friendship—the lessons he had taught? In short, would she forget her master?

"Upas, girl?" articulated Tilac, making a singular sound.

The tigress did not heed him. The signal had lost its potency. She glanced at Alethe as if for her final wishes, then sprang at Tilac, who, with muttered execrations and a cry, darted from the bungalow.

Alethe followed, and found Upas in the veranda, excited and angry, and glaring toward the jungle. Tilac was not to be seen. A part of his sarong was lying under her feet.

"Lethe! Lethe!" cried Barnabas, springing to the veranda.

"Here!" said Alethe.

"The house is full of smoke," he added. "The wind has drifted it in fast. We've wasted time in tryin' to put out the fire. Where's Melicent? Ida's out yonder with the Major and Kavanagh; but where in the name o' natur' is 'tother one?"

"Come with me, Mr. Barnabas; I'll show you the way to her chamber. I fear she is suffocated by the smoke."

The girl glided through the stifling air to Melicent's room. She found the door open, and searched in vain for her mistress, aided by Barnabas.

"Look no more!" cried Alethe, "Tilac has been here. My mistress is carried away. He came for me, and had I not been defended by Upas, I should have shared, as was doubtless intended, her misfortune. Hasten, Mr. Barnabas, to overtake those who have borne her away."

"It's an easy thing, little gal, to tell me to hurry arter her; but which way am I to go?"

"I don't know. We will think of it while we prepare for flight," she replied, in a troubled tone.

"You, and I, and the other one," said Barnabas, "will aid the elephant. The Major and the Lieutenant are goin' on horseback. Here they are, horses saddled and bridled. Whoa, Methuselah, whoa."

The concluding words were, of course, addressed to the elephant, who was stepping about uneasily, piping and snuffing the air.

"Easy, my beauty; don't go for to wor-

ryin' yourself. A pill or two in your side wout hurt ye. Don't fret, old boy; don't fret."

"Where is Melicent?" cried Major Rainbold, anxiously; "I trusted the girls to you. Where, in Heaven's name, have you left her? Not in the burning building, surely?"

"Some sneakin' critter has stole her away," replied Hutton.

"Stole her away!" roared the Major. "Have you allowed her to be stolen away, Sir? I don't allow her to be stolen away, Sir, demme! Alethe—Ida—speak! Have you lost your tongues? Can't you say something? Am I to go distracted before your eyes?"

"That strange being called Tilac has been here," answered Alethe; "and there is no doubt but he is the cause of her disappearance. Mr. Barnabas is going after her. Mr. Barnabas always gets what he goes after."

"Blast Mr. Barnabas!" cried the choleric Major, provoked at the coolness and exceeding faith of Alethe. "I want my girl, and will go for her myself. Which way did the rascal carry her? Why hadn't you told me of this ha'm an hour ago?"

Rainbold was in a paroxysm of consternation, which prevented him from knowing exactly what he said.

"She hasn't been missin' as long as that," replied Barnabas, coolly. "We've but this minute found out about it. We're goin' to do everything that's possible. Better mount your horses right away, gentlemen. Action is a great deal better nor talk. Down, Methuselah! To your knees, old boy! Let me help you up, gals. 'Lethe, take hold of Miss Gregor; for your more used to elephant-ridin' nor she is. That's a-gile—pretty and a-gile! Up like birds! Now stick on tight, for the old boy rolls like a ship at sea, when he's in a hurry. If you slop off, can't stop to pick you up, you know. We shall scuttle along like a thousand kegs o' gunpowder, when we get started. Where's the kitten, 'Lethe? What's come on it, eh?"

"Upas! Upas!" cried Alethe. "Upas! Upas!" She raised her voice each time she repeated the name. In a moment the tigress bounded to the spot, trailing after her a portion of Tilac's sarong that she had captured. The horses snorted and reared. Ida shrieked, and the Major was dumb with bewilderment.

"Don't fear, Miss Ida! This is a tame and friendly creature," Alethe hastened to say. "Come up, Upas! Come up!"

The beautiful animal leaped with wonderful lightness to the side of its now acknowledged mistress. Ida was disposed to shrink from such companionship; but seeing Upas lick the girl's hand and press her head against her cheek, to express her confidence and affection, she regained her self-possession.

"Curious doings!" muttered the Major. "Everything changes here. Nothing remains as it was five minutes together. The girl has got that tiger from some of her confounded native relations, I s'pose, to bite us, or scratch somebody's eyes out. Shouldn't wonder if she swapped Melicent for it, demme!"

"No, Major, there ha'n't been no trade o' that natur'," interposed Barnabas. "That critter was give me by a generous cuss. I turned it over to 'Lethe to be boarded, lodged, and eddicated. She's got the upper hand on't a'ready, you see. Bless your body, Major, she'd been carried off herself, if it hadn't been for that pretty kitten! Don't they look peart and sassy up there together, like three graces on a load o' hay!"

"The Sepoys! the Sepoys! Our poor Melicent must have fallen into the hands of those wretches. Oh, Mr. Kavanagh, what can we do?" exclaimed Ida.

The Major groaned.

"Yes, yes!" he murmured, huskily. "My sweet girl is lost. Oh, that I should live to know that she is subjected to the pitiless cruelties of fiends in human form!"

"This is most lamentable!" said Kavanagh. "I cannot understand how Miss Rainbold could have been abducted without our knowledge. It must have been done with extraordinary quickness and cunning. My word for it, the serpent Hydrabad has had an agency in this."

"I now remember," said Ida, "that when I came out of the house, I heard a clatter of horse's feet, just yonder, where the bridle-path runs along by the native huts."

"That bridle-path, then, Miss Gregor," said Barnabas, "is what we want to find."

"Girl," said the Major, arousing himself, "you said something about a visit from some one. Who was it, and what was it?"

"That unexpected visit," answered Alethe, "was from a mysterious man called Tilac, the tiger-tamer, whom it has been my misfortune to encounter before. He sprang to take me in his arms, and would have succeeded had it not been for the power I had acquired over this creature, which was at that moment sleeping, unobserved, at my feet. In my surprise and terror I cried, 'Upas! Upas!' and she shot upon him like an arrow, forgetful of the hand that had reared her. He fled, with a cry. I followed. When I reached the veranda, he had disappeared, and the animal, with this fragment of sarong under her feet, was looking intently and angrily in the direction mentioned by Miss Ida. By the help of this dumb, yet far-sighted, keen-scented creature, united with the speed and sagacity of the elephant, we shall be able to trace my dear mistress."

"There's sense for ye!" said Barnabas. "She knows more than all of us, I vow! Now we're *El pluribus* unanimous! Mount, Major, mount! Can you manage to guide, Lieutenant, with one arm?"

"Think not of me, my friend. I have already forgotten my wounded arm. See! it is out of the sling, and, if necessary, I can hold the rein with it while I use the other for defence. Miss Macgregor, are you safely seated? Is your strength equal to this emergency?"

Kavanagh had drawn near to Methuselah, and now looked most earnestly at Ida. His terrible anxiety and his great love were pictured upon his face.

"I can bear all things with patient firmness," answered Ida, in a low and meaning voice, "if I may but rely on your promise. Remember, my friend, the barbarity of the Sepoys; and when hope is lost, I shall look to you for that to which you have pledged yourself. I will not shrink, Mr. Kavanagh. I will accept it as a full and perfect expression of your love."

"I am not certain, Ida, that it is possible, as I once said to you; but I think I may be able to keep my promise," he said, sadly.

"I will have no doubt, Kavanagh. Say 'I will do it,' and say it firmly," said Miss Macgregor, in accents deeper and more thrilling.

"Miss Macgregor, if the moment of such dire extremity should come, you yourself shall command my arm. Look at me in the manner you told me, with your hands clasped, and it shall be as you will! The sacrifice will be forgiven by Heaven."

"Thanks, my friend! Thanks are all that Ida Macgregor can give you."

"Nay!" whispered Alethe, "you have given him more!"

The girl had scarcely murmured these words when a stunning report of musketry reverberated in the jungle, and a dozen bullets whistled around them.

"On!" shouted the Major. "On!"

With an angry shriek, Methuselah launched across the open area, and with long, rolling steps, swept like a mountain-slide along the arched and dusky path.

Major Rainbold and Kavanagh galloped furiously behind, their swift and high-mettled horses straining every muscle to keep pace with the elephant.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE SHADOW OF DEATH.

Not till the rapid motion of the horse revived her, did Melicent Rainbold fully understand that she was being carried away from her friends. Her feelings were those of terror and despair. Her first impression was that she was in the power of the Sepoys—the most alarming thought that could have entered her mind. The suddenness of the transaction had bewildered her. It had not seemed possible that a person could be caught up and spirited away with so much adroitness and celerity.

She had not yet seen the face of the man in whose arms she was held, nor did she dare look over her shoulder to see it. He presently slackened his speed, and two men on horseback came up with him. They were both natives, and Melicent was glad to observe that they did not wear the uniform of the Sepoys. The painted features of Tilac she instantly remembered; for they had been too deeply impressed on her imagination in

that moment of consternation, when, rushing into her apartment, he caught her in his arms. The figures on his dark cheeks, the red and white stripes across his forehead, the redness of his teeth, and the craftiness of his eyes, all served to increase her dread and apprehension.

Feeling her trembling in his arms, the person who was supporting her in the saddle, now addressed her. It was the first time since her seizure that a word had been spoken.

"Do not distress yourself unnecessarily, Miss Rainbold," he said.

Nothing could have amazed Melicent more than that voice! Indignation now mingled with her fears.

"Mr. Bracegirdle," she said, after two or three stammering efforts to speak, "it is to you, then, that I am indebted for this outrage! To you, Raynor Bracegirdle, the son of my father's friend, and the recipient of my father's hospitality!"

"How have you treated the son of your father's friend, Miss Rainbold?" asked Raynor, with a bitter resentment.

"Better than he deserved," replied Melicent, with hot contempt. "You should have been driven from my home with scorn and reproaches! Ay, you should have been scourged thence!"

"What was my crime, Miss Rainbold? I will tell you. My love was my crime!" said Raynor, bitterly.

"I cast back the falsehood! Your heart was full of crime. Love had no place in it. But there was room enough there for envy, hatred, and murder!"

She spoke with cool and cutting severity. For an instant, Bracegirdle was confounded.

"The terms you make use of, Miss Rainbold, are most offensive and unjust." He tried to assume the air of an injured man.

"It is a flimsy artifice, that of falsehood," returned Melicent. "Your dark secrets are known, not to me only, but to others."

Tilac, the tiger-tamer, bent forward in his saddle to hear her words.

"Tell me, Sir, where is your Hydrabad? 'Perhaps'—she turned her flashing eyes on Tilac—"perhaps this is he, disguised to suit your occasion."

Tilac shrugged his shoulders, settled into his saddle, and showed his red teeth in a laugh so anomalous that she could not understand it.

Bracegirdle himself appeared struck by this observation, and glanced quickly at the tiger-tamer. As for Melicent, she saw, or thought she saw, a resemblance to Hydrabad in the painted face of Tilac.

"Your allusion to the impostor, Hydrabad," said Raynor, "are to me unintelligible. That he was a base villain, may nor may not be evident, to you or me; but that I had any connection with him, is as false as injurious."

"Add not falsehood to falsehood!" she retorted. "It was with that crafty native that you devised the death of Neal Kavanagh."

Tilac looked steadily at his horse's ears. His lips were fixed, expressing nothing but stoical indifference.

"The death of Kavanagh!" repeated Raynor.

"Deny it not! I know the method, and the manner of its accomplishment. Hydrabad dropped the fatal drop into the wound."

Glancing at Tilac, Melicent saw but the whites of his eyes rolled upward. Was there anything like Hydrabad about those eyes?

She felt a shudder passing through the arms of Raynor. His heart beat with sudden violence. The certainty that he was revealed to the woman he thought he loved, affected him strangely. She allowed him to suffer a brief space, then added: "Why do you not ask if he live?"

"I care not!" muttered Bracegirdle.

"Then you shall remain in doubt. If he lives, it is not by your good-will; if he is dead, it is by your hand. It was not really Hydrabad who dropped the fatal drop; it was you who poured it into the wound."

"Talk not of this, Miss Rainbold," he replied, gloomily. "Think of yourself and not of me. Whatever I have done, it was for you that I did it. Bear that in your memory. Bear it now and ever!"

"Knowing that you are a hypocrite, a liar, and a murderer, what emotions do you hope to excite in me but aversion and horror. The hope of winning my esteem has perished forever. You can extort nothing from me

to make you happy. Remember what atonement and reparation you yet may. Return me to those who love me, and do penance ever after for the great crime of your life. I make this appeal earnestly and solemnly."

Tilac threw an inquisitive glance at Melicent.

"It may not be, Miss Rainbold! The die is cast. My choice is made; my destiny recorded."

His brow was lowering, his voice gloomy. "An evil persisted in is an evil hourly repeated. Your crime becomes thrice a crime; your treachery, thrice treachery."

She paused, surprised at her own firmness.

"The will of the gods," said Tilac, "must be done, though all the people of India oppose it."

"There is but one God," said Melicent.

"True!" responded Tilac. "And we shall not behold Him till the morn."

"God," returned Melicent, "is never visible to man."

"Your God is never visible, but mine is," said Tilac, sombrely.

"A Gueber!" exclaimed Melicent.

"I worship Heat and Light. The element of Fire is eternal."

There was a dark energy in his words—a latent enthusiasm streaming up faintly from the dead ashes of superstition and ignorance, owing its life to the natural instinct of worship in man.

"When the time comes for Tilac to be absorbed in the glorious element of Fire, he will be absorbed. We know when Death is near."

Struck by something in his tones, Melicent asked:

"How do you know when Death is near?"

"By the inspiration of my faith," answered Tilac, with energy. "Death is near, now!" He looked up with an icy smile. "Do either of you feel cold?"

Bracegirdle shivered.

"Coldness is the shadow of Death!" Tilac sighed, and muttered to himself.

"When an icy thrill creeps slowly on one," he added, raising his mysterious eyes again to the face of Melicent, "chilling flesh and blood, soul and spirit, without known cause or comprehended reason, it is the signal of Death!"

Bracegirdle started suddenly, and cried out in a tone of horror. Melicent glanced over her shoulder, and saw a cobra-capello coil itself like lightning round his neck. She did not move; she did not breathe; she did not have but one thought, before the venomous reptile darted its fangs into the flesh.

"Raynor's arms relaxed their hold upon Melicent; the bridle dropped from his fingers. A stony horror overspread his features. With a groan, a moan, and an agonizing cry, he plucked the cobra from his throat, tore it asunder, and cast it upon the ground."

During this time, the horses had been going at an easy canter; now, as if controlled by one impulse, they stopped, dilated their nostrils, settled backward upon their haunches, and trembled.

"They feel the Death!" said Tilac, in a tone that froze the blood in Melicent's veins. "Animals often know when the divine fire is going out. Dogs sometimes sit at their masters' gates and howl piteously over the prophecy of death that is within them. Animals are the providences of man. They are not only his servants, his friends, but his monitors."

Melicent sprang from the horse, and shrank with a shudder from the writhing strings of the cobra, tied in quivering knots in the path.

Bracegirdle sat for a few dreadful moments in icy and mortal dread, then drawing forth a revolver with fierce haste, fired its six barrels one after the other at Tilac, who sat smiling and motionless on his horse.

"You cannot kill the devil!" he sneered.

"I thought so! I thought so!" cried Bracegirdle, gnashing his teeth. "You have betrayed me, accursed! But there may be hope."

With these exclamations, he turned his horse, lanced its sides savagely with his spurs, and sprang away on the backward path.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE CHILD OF THE CORD.

"Let him ride!" sneered Tilac. "He'll not ride far. The wound will turn dark; a black ooze will gush from it, and he will die in pain."

While Tilac gazed after the vanishing form of Bracegirdle, the realization of her situation burst upon Melicent. She was now in the hands of two natives, of whom she had everything to learn and everything to suspect. She had gained nothing, she feared, by the late thrilling event. Seeing Tilac and his companion looking after the lessening shape of Bracegirdle, the thought of escape came upon her, and she fled into the jungle, which, in that place, was dense. She ran swiftly, but not far. The attempt to vie with the speed of Tilac, she knew would fail; she therefore dropped down among the foliage, and lay motionless. It proved the best thing she could have done; for both Tilac and his companion passed her in furious chase. When their steps sounded far distant, she arose and hurried back to the bridle-path, in which the horses were quietly standing. Taking a stick from the ground, she struck each a blow, which sent them galloping away. This done, she crept into the vines on the opposite side, and cowered close to the earth.

In a few minutes, Tilac and the other returned, astonished and at fault. Discovering that their horses had run away, even the stolidism of Tilac was moved.

"By the burning sun!" he exclaimed, "we prosper not, Kassim. This grieves me more than the treachery of Upas, who tore my sarong and wounded my flesh. She must have hidden. I am always cunning, yet always baffled."

"Yes, answered Kassim, 'the prey is ever snatched from your hand. The English girl did well; for to sorrow she would have come at last. Where are our horses, Hydrabad? I had rather have my beautiful mare than your white Englishwoman.'

"Accursed be you and your mare! And accursed be Bowanee and Thuggee, and all the gods of the Strangler!" cried Tilac, in a dark and gloomy rage.

"Throw not scorn in the face of your deities," said Kassim, contemptuously.

"You are right, Kassim. I should curse none of the gods. The gods are sometimes the most friendly when they seem most adverse. But this English girl, Kassim, was fairer than the daughters of earth are wont to be. You have seen me charm the snake; you have seen me hold it in irresistible bondage by the simple power of my will. So this goddess of a woman has charmed me. The charmer is charmed; the tamer is tamed."

Tilac paused, and his brown breast rose and fell with emotion.

"I was fascinated, and I was the serpent under her feet. She detested me as such. She shrank with shuddering and loathing from Hydrabad, or Tilac, or any one with a swarthy skin. Her scorn was like arrows, and her hate like spears. Ah, had she known I was one of the Accursed People, she would have seen me dragged at the feet of wild horses with a feeling of joy! There was no hope for a black son of India. Think not that I loved, Kassim. If I loved, I also hated. My passion was like the glimmer of burnished steel, cold and deadly. She would have withered in my hand. I should have blighted her like the vapors that rise in the valley of the Guevo, Upas. Kassim, I am not a man but a devil! In me dwells Satan. My joy is in destruction; my pleasure in pain; my happiness in the misery of others."

"Thou art indeed Satan!" answered Kassim, in a shuddering voice.

"Think'st thou so, my Kassim?" answered Tilac, laughing. "Thine eyes have been long in learning to see."

"Stop where you are a moment; if you are Satan, where was your power over the tigress? Do not the beasts bow to Satan?"

"Now thou art on serious ground," replied Hydrabad. "The devil has no power over animals. As I said not long ago, animals are the providences of God. That which lives true to its nature has nothing to fear from God or devil. Animals live true to their natures; therefore have nothing to fear. Responsible beings we may control; but animals, and lightning, and storms, are the arrows of God."

Tilac turned his darting eyes to the soft

heavens, and muttering a strange invocation, beat wildly upon his breast.

"Do you feel cold?" asked Hydrabad.

"Yes," answered Kassim, trembling. "I feel cold."

"It is the shadow of death!" said Tilac; and leaping upon Kassim like a ravenous lion, he slipped a noose over his head, threw him upon his face, stood upon his shoulders, and strangled him. When life was extinct, he lifted the body, cast it into the bushes, and went his way.

Melicent, from her grassy hiding-place, witnessed this terrific scene with sensations of horror too intense to be described. Her brain reeled and whirled, and staggered with awe and dread long after the Strangler had disappeared from her swimming sight.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE PALANQUIN.

While Melicent was slowly recovering from the shock her nerves had sustained, a palanquin, borne by four natives, came in sight. In the palanquin was a European about thirty years of age, of a pleasing countenance, and wearing the uniform of an officer of high rank. That face gave her confidence. Her blood thrilled with pleasure. Despair gave place to hope, and sickly fear to healthful anticipation. She obeyed the first impulse of her mind, and arising, hastened to intercept the palanquin. At the first glimpse of her figure, the officer commanded his bearers to halt, and arose from his recumbent position. The natural gallantry of his nation was instantly displayed.

"Lady," he cried, "do I indeed behold the face of a countrywoman. Surely, it is misfortune alone that brings you here. Nay, speak not. Your pale face, your disheveled hair, your clasped hands, your imploring expression, tell me what is the duty of a true gentleman."

He sprang from the palanquin, and advancing to Melicent, doffed his military cap, and extended his hand. It was his left hand that he offered.

"Excuse the left hand, Madam," he said, "for the right has tasted of rebel steel."

Melicent took the proffered hand with indescribable emotion. Never, never had human hand appeared so precious. Her feelings overpowered her, and staggering forward, she was received unconscious on the brave breast of the stranger. With not a little pain to his wound, with his own hands he placed her in the palanquin. Her wondrous beauty excited not only his sympathies but his admiration. With her respiration apparently suspended, her cheeks ivory white, her long, dark lashes closed over her eyes, she presented to him a picture of beauty and helplessness which not only appealed to his manhood, but called forth the tenderest feelings of his soul.

Taking from the pocket of the palanquin a flask, he bathed her brow and moistened her lips with its contents. When indications of returning life appeared, he ordered the bearers to proceed, and watching her countenance unremittingly, walked by her side.

Melicent went on dreamily. She had but one consciousness, and that was a vague realization of relief and safety. However deep ran the current of her inward withdrawal from the external world, that sense of rescue was present, imminent, delicious. The motion of the palanquin was like the luxuriant undulation of waves; the sound of the Englishman's voice was like a mother's lullaby, inviting repose and confidence. She drifted on like a living dream; like a fancy swimming in a Lethean river; like a thought divorced from care.

If Melicent sighed, it was not from suffering; if her lips quivered, it was not from fear; if she clasped her white hands, it was not a prayer for mercy, for she knew that an English officer walked beside her. She knew what kind of stuff English officers were made of; and in her weakness, in the reaction of her overwrought sensibilities, she remembered her countrymen, and had faith in the national honor. She tried to smile her gratitude, and then, despite her best resolutions, sank into a state of dreaminess.

In this tranquil condition Melicent was carried a long distance, through an unfrequented and narrow way, where there was scarcely room to admit the passage of the palanquin. She revived while being borne up a flight of stone steps. A large door was then opened in an antique-looking building,

and the palanquin set down in a wide stone hall. Melicent perceived at once that she was in an old idol temple. The officer assisted her to alight, and seeing that she was quite restored, was exceedingly gratified. He introduced himself.

"My name, Madam, is Argent," he said. "I hold the rank of Colonel in the British Army. My regiment is now in active service, and it is my misfortune and not my fault that I am not at the head of it. Having been wounded with the sabre of a mutinous Sepoy, I was considered unfit for duty, and with a few trusty men, took charge of some English ladies, most of them wives and daughters of the officers in my regiment. Among those ladies was a beloved sister. I accepted this trust as a solemn duty, and have discharged it to the best of my ability. With infinite difficulty, and after many escapes and thrilling adventures, I succeeded in safely reaching this old temple, which a devoted servant informed me was a place so remote and little visited, that we might remain concealed here, unmolested, a long time. The temple is large, with innumerable secret avenues and priestly contrivances, which kept one continually making fresh discoveries and finding new hiding-places. To the ladies I have spoken of, Madam, I shall now have much pleasure in conducting you."

"Colonel Argent," answered Melicent, joyfully affected by what she had heard, "nothing could be more agreeable than the turn which Providence has given my fortunes within the last hour. The particulars I will tell you when I am somewhat recovered from fatigue and excitement. I am the daughter of Major Alexis Rainbold, of whom you may have heard. Last night, I was suddenly seized, placed on a horse, and hurried away. What transpired afterward, you shall know in good time."

It was now morning. The sun had not arisen, but there was a ruddy glow in the east that betokened his coming. It was not yet light enough to see in the temple. Colonel Argent rang a bell, and an English soldier, with a wooden leg, appeared with a lamp. Looking around her, Melicent saw various niches, in some of which were hideous idols.

"I have heard of Major Rainbold," said Argent, leading the way. "He is a brave officer, and has seen service. I am most fortunate in being able to offer shelter and safety to his daughter."

The Colonel never spoke with more sincerity in his life. His whole deportment bore testimony to the interest Melicent had excited in his mind.

As the wooden-legged soldier went stumping before him, and the young lady leaned timidly upon his arm, there was a flutter of his nerves and a turmoil of the blood that he had never before experienced.

After many and, to Melicent, inexplicable windings and turnings, opening and shutting of doors, she was finally ushered into the presence of the ladies alluded to. Her reception was all she could have wished; friendly, cordial, and earnest. When she had related the incidents of the night just passed, their interest and kindness, if possible, increased. The colonel's sister, a fair-haired, blue-eyed girl, was particularly attentive and sympathizing. When it was presently insisted upon that Melicent should take some repose, this fair girl sat by her till she awoke, soothing her troubled tossings, and watching anxiously her fevered dreams.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE DECOY AND THE SERPENTINE VIAL.

The elephant swept on. He seemed an immense missile hurled from a gigantic engine. Although the horses laid back their ears, stretched out their necks, and devoured the ground with their spanning feet, they soon were left behind, and Barnabas was obliged to slacken the speed of Methuselah.

"It is most exciting!" said Ida. "If Melicent were with us, I could almost feel happy. This is a royal beast, Mr. Hutton."

"Well, it's about as spry as they make, I guess. You wouldn't think such a wounded great critter was spry, would ye? Spry! Bless your pretty face, Miss Idy! He hasn't scarcely started, yet. You see I got him partly for the turf, partly for his intelligence, and partly for his strength. That makes three parties; and he's got 'em, I vow! He's got the ad valorem both in speed, sagacity, and power. And as for size, Mum, there isn't a

barn in Ameriky that can compete with him in bigness. The Yankees, young woman, go in for the tiptop of everything. Common consarns don't do for 'em. They outgrew mediocrity years ago. If a Yankee has a horse, it must be a fast horse; if he has a farm, it must be an almighty great one; if he has a wife, she must be awful handsome; if he has children, them children must be the smartest in all creation."

Barnabas paused, and bending forward, patted one of Methuselah's broad ears with his lance, which he never forgot to take with him.

"If he has an elephant," he added, with pride, "he must be an elephant like Methuselah. He must. Yes!"

Mr. Hutton pronounced the concluding words with the greatest complacency. But he was not a little startled just then at hearing Upas—whose muzzle, as she sat placidly on the elephant, reached, over his shoulder, directly in close nearness to his cheek and ear—emit a most unexpected and astounding roar. Barnabas was so consternated by this explosion that he plunged forward to Methuselah's head without ceremony. Safely lodged on this expansive surface, he whipped round and turned backward a face so full of comical amazement, that it excited the risibility of both the girls.

"That comes o' that generous cuss!" he cried. "What you mean, you screechin' kitten? Sick, ain't ye? Seized suddint, I s'pect. Don't mean to chaw, do ye? If you do, don't commence on them tender things, but try your teeth in a tough Yankee." Hutton brought his lance into warlike position; but Upas, with her handsome head in the air, did not in the least notice him. She repeated the prolonged and singular sound. It was answered afar off in the jungle.

Miss Macgregor was looking at Alethe, and observed that she grew pale; that her lips parted; that her eyes dilated. She could not comprehend this change, but continued to look at her. Upas threw her nose in the air again, and reiterated the note that had produced so much surprise. It was now neither harsh nor abrupt; but soft, musical, and protracted. Without the lapse of a moment, the swelling bugle-cry was responded to; but it was not a melodious wail; it was a deep, startling roar.

"A decoy tigress!" exclaimed Alethe, in great alarm.

"A decoy tigress? What do you mean, little 'un?" asked Barnabas.

"Upas is a decoy. She has been trained to allure the fierce lords of the forest from their secret lairs. It is the work of Tilac! Every male tiger within the sound of her voice will be upon us. We may need a score of beaters and hunters to repel them, and we may need no more than your single arm, aided by Upas and the elephant. Heaven only knows! Where is my—where is my master!" She stopped and strained her starry eyes on the backward path. "I see him! I see him!" she added, clasping her hands. "Isn't he a brave, handsome man, Miss Macgregor? Don't you love him, Miss Macgregor?"

"Yes," answered Ida, astonished and bewildered. "I love my guardian."

"You ought! you ought! You cannot find a braver man or a kinder gentleman. Ask him to expose you to danger, and he would go into a towering rage; ask him to risk his life for you, and he'd smile. What can be better than that? Do you know anything more exalted, Miss Ida?"

Miss Macgregor, impelled by a kindly influence, laid her hands on the shining hair of Alethe, and looked into her face as she had never done before. There was love, doubt, surprise, in that look.

"Alethe," she said, in a gentle tone, "forgive me if I have ever called you ought but sister. I knew," she whispered, "there was a mystery in the whiteness of your skin and the Christian sweetness of your temper; but your secret never before shone from your eyes or spoke to me in the ineffable tenderness of your lips."

Ida kissed the girl's forehead, her lips, her cheeks, and her dimpled chin. Alethe began to weep.

"You have betrayed me!" she murmured. "You have ravished from me my inner life. But your eyes and your kisses might betray one wiser than I. I complain not, I reproach not, I only ask silence. For the sake of Melicent, for the sake of him (see how brave he looks!) I ask silence."

Those words were whispered most hurriedly and most softly into the ear of Ida, which the white lips of Alethe touched.

"Fear not!" responded Miss Macgregor, deeply moved. "A bond is established between us that may never, never be broken. Trust, my dreamy-eyed, trust!"

"E pluribus! You gals 'pear to be meltin' and runnin' together. I don't see what's the good of kissin' and cryin'. Let the varmint roar. Who cares for roarin'? I don't, and Methuselah don't. Bless your little pink bodies, he could kill a regiment of 'em! Don't be uneasy—don't. Pray keep the watery elements in their nat'ral reservoir, and don't drown your pretty eyes. A drowned pair o' eyes is dim, and a'n't the things to look at."

Both Ida and Alethe smiled at honest Barnabas.

"That's more cheerful like," quoth he. "We can take care of ourselves, I'll warrant."

Upas cried out again, and the masculine voice responded much nearer than before.

"Can't you stop her?" asked Barnabas. "Clap a brake on her organs." His voice betrayed some uneasiness.

"Tilac has trained her. Habit is stronger in this instance, than my influence. Be prepared, Mr. Barnabas, for a conflict. The male tiger will soon be upon us, and Upas will attack it; but I fear she will not be equal to the struggle. Bring your elephant to her help."

A tremendous roar shook the jungle. A splendid full-grown tiger sprang into the narrow track before them. Upas bounded over the head of Barnabas, and alighted on the ground. The stranger tiger was not disposed to combat; but Upas darted on him like an arrow, and a fierce conflict followed.

"Methuselah! Methuselah!" cried Barnabas. "Pick him out—pick him out, old boy! Don't let him git the better of the little 'un. At him—I say, at him!"

Animated by the earnest voice of Hutton—and Methuselah needed small incentive when a fight was in view—the elephant rushed to the whirling and mixed mass of tiger, and darting out his trunk, seized the new-comer with unerring certainty, and lifted him in air; but both tigers were so interlocked and so savagely interlocked, that they rose together in the omnipotent arm of Methuselah. Upas, guided by her instincts and her training, and seeing how the battle was being decided, struggled free, and dropped lightly to the earth. But the wild, princely, and hitherto unmatched male, writhed hopelessly in the coil of the elephant; his ribs yielded, his bones cracked like glass, and his proud life was extinguished.

Methuselah carried the quivering and unresisting weight a short distance, then dropped it with a shrill whistle of disdain and triumph.

Upas watched its conquered foe a moment, and then flew back to Alethe with the lightness of a bird, and put up its head to be caressed. Alethe could not resist the eloquent appeal. However mistaken the action, the motive was of the best, and in harmony with her education. Her eyes sparkled like the fires of a forge. Her mouth was open, her tongue thrust out, and her chest heaving with recent exertion; but there was a perceptible and comprehensible expression and glow of pride in the dumb face of Upas. It would have been cruel not to respond to it.

Alethe threw her arms around her neck, kissed her soft head, and spoke kindly to her. The creature seemed ready to die with pride and pleasure; for it is the same with man or animal, a sense of duty done brings happiness. Every gradation of life is governed by its instincts or its wisdom. Upas was governed by her instincts and her wisdom.

Barnabas Hutton witnessed this, not only with wonder but admiration. He really believed that Alethe never did and never would do anything that was not entirely warranted by the circumstances of the case. Barnabas trusted in Alethe and in Methuselah. He knew what these had done. He had been an eye-witness of the courage and devotion of the first; and as for the latter, long companionship had assured him of his fidelity and friendship.

"Demme," cried the Major, spurring up, "the jungle is full of tigers!"

"There's one of 'em I'll make you a present of," answered Barnabas, pointing to the lifeless animal that lay in the path. "If any

more on 'em come, they'll git the same rypection."

"Dead!" exclaimed Kavanagh.

"Dead, demme!" said the Major.

"Dead, demme!" quoth Barnabas.

He looked humorously at the Major.

"Have hard work to keep up, don't ye?"

Then to Alethe: "You'll have to tie a string round that kitten's neck, if it's goin' to make them noises. We can't stop to fight with tigers every few minutes. If we're goin' on a reg'lar hunt, I'd rather take daylight for't."

"I'll try and keep her quiet, Mr. Barnabas," replied Alethe.

"I wonder what's comin' now?" said Hutton, who was ever on the alert. This query referred to a sound resembling the rapid gallop of a horse, and which soon proved to be such.

While all eyes were fastened in the direction of the clattering, a man on horseback suddenly appeared, whom they recognized. It was Raynor Bracegirdle. He drew up his horse, with every sign of intense excitement.

"I am bitten! I am bitten!" he cried. His pallid face, his despairing voice, and the general agitation of his manner, showed how terribly he realized his situation.

The parties looked at him with dismay. Barnabas was the first to speak.

"What's the matter of ye?" he asked. "You look like a ghost a horseback."

"I have been bitten by a cobra-capello! Will you sit looking at me like statues? Cannot something be done? Will you see me die miserably before your eyes, without lifting a hand?" exclaimed Bracegirdle, in starting accents.

"Don't know what we can do for ye," answered Barnabas. "The bite of one of them snakes is pesky p'ison. Shouldn't want one of 'em to tackle me, not by no means. Folks never get over them kind o' hurts, I've heerd."

Alethe slid down from the elephant. The movement was so quick, that Hutton was not aware of it till he saw her standing on the ground.

"Shall I save him, Mr. Barnabas?" she asked, as if arrested by a sudden thought.

"I don't know, Brownie! He don't seem scurcely worth it. Howsomever, if you've got that anecdote about ye, you'd better try it. I don't like to see a fellow-critter die from the bite of a plaguy snake."

"I thought you'd say so, Mr. Barnabas," answered Alethe. She turned to Bracegirdle. "Get off your horse. Be quick, for the venom of the cobra is speedy."

"I know not what you mean," said Raynor, "but in Heaven's name try what you will."

He threw himself from his horse, and barring his neck, knelt at Alethe's feet.

"There! there is the wound!" he gasped. "Do you not see it? I feel death already in my veins. It is stealing upon me. There is ice in my blood!"

"Keep still, Do not tremble. You can die but once. Even good men must die once," said Alethe, producing the serpentine vial, and preparing to apply its contents.

"Good men," groaned Bracegirdle, "can die easier than I. Save me! save me!"

She dropped the sparkling elixir into the wound.

Bracegirdle shivered and writhed.

"It scorches," said he, "like fire! It thrills through me as lightning. Girl! girl! I fear you have deceived me. You excite hope, that my despair may be more dreadful."

"Look at him!" replied Alethe, pointing to Kavanagh.

Bracegirdle raised his eyes, and, seeing the young officer, was greatly amazed.

"The dead comes to reproach me! he muttered. "I am surely dying, for phantoms flit before my failing sight. All things reel; all things stagger; all things fail! The earth slips from beneath my feet; I slide off; I go down into the vortex! Oh, for some human hand to grasp!" Bracegirdle spoke in agony and bitterness; in fear, in remorse. He saw his sins overtaking him; he saw his hypocrisy rolling upon him like billows of the sea, engulfing him forever.

"Take my hand! take my hand!" said Alethe. "Hold it fast! hold it fast! It will keep you on the earth. It will keep you from darkness."

Bracegirdle clutched her hand like a drowning man. He pressed it to his forehead; he held it in both his; he clung to it, as to his life; he sobbed upon it piteously. There is

nothing like a friendly human hand in the hopeless hour of the soul's dread and darkness. It is more than gold, it is more than houses and lands.

"You will live, Mr. Bracegirdle, you will live," said Alethe, allowing him to crush her little hand in his, to bruise it, to moisten it with his tears, and to kiss it. He believed himself dying; in the hour of dying one must have something tangible to grasp. Uncertainty will not do. Dying flesh and blood clings to living flesh and blood with inexpressible yearning. No matter whether the dying be good or bad, it is the same.

"You will live, Mr. Bracegirdle, you will live," repeated Alethe. "This is a sovereign antidote for poison. It saved him—" she pointed to Kavanagh.

"It saved him!" said Bracegirdle, somewhat wildly.

"A single drop, Mr. Bracegirdle."

"But there is a difference!" moaned Raynor. "He deserved to be saved; I do not. I, the betrayer, have been betrayed. By the hand of Tilac I perish. Rainbold—Kavanagh—should you ever find this Tilac, slay him as you would a venomous reptile!"

"How do you feel?" asked Alethe. "Is there not a burning in the wound and a thrill in your blood?"

"I can almost think so," said Raynor, slowly.

"Think again."

"It is true! There is a glow in my blood. The ice changes to fire. I swelter—I burn!"

"It will pass," said Alethe.

"Hear me!" exclaimed Raynor. "If I live, my life shall be at your service. I freely lay it at your feet. Tread on it, as you would on a serpent, or use it as you please; it shall be no longer mine."

"Vows made in peril are incipient lies. The man who is bad, is bad from his own nature, and bad he will ever remain. Arise, Mr. Bracegirdle, mount your horse, and go whither you will. You are snatched from death, and for that be thankful. That which saved him saves you." She again pointed at Kavanagh. "Had he died, you also would have died. That which thwarted you, also saves you."

"Is everybody listenin' to this?" asked Barnabas, aglow with honest earnest enthusiasm. "For the sake o' human natur', I hope your faculties are lively. The way I look at things, nothin' can be more instructive nor this. Look at that small gal, will ye?" Barnabas leveled his arm at Alethe. The Major looked at him very affectionately indeed, and as he had never before looked at him. He appeared to have made an important discovery. What could it have been?

"There's a gal," continued Barnabas, "that don't perfer to be a Christian; that don't perfer nothin'; and yet you see she's done it. Not everybody would done it. But, Major"—he turned to Rainbold—"she isn't so dark as some o' the natyves. There's more white in her than there is of 'tother. Now, Major"—he raised his right hand, which had the lance in it—"that color's superior to any other. I like it better, and it is better!"

"You're a fine fellow, demme!" vociferated the Major. "I should like a regiment of such lads, and if I had 'em I'd march to the relief of Lucknow without loss of time."

"They make officers of such men in America," said Kavanagh.

"And brave officers, too, I'll be bound!" responded the Major. He glanced again at Hutton, then at Alethe; but his eye dwelt longest, and apparently with most pleasure, on the latter.

"Mount your horse, Mr. Bracegirdle," repeated Alethe, "and go your way. The danger, as I have told you, is past. Trust not, in future, the friendship of bad men."

"Accursed Tilac!" muttered Bracegirdle. He arose from the earth upon which he had sunk after the application of the elixir. He did not think he had strength to stand, or recover his seat in the saddle; but upon making the trial, he found himself stronger than he had thought. A pleasant languor stole over him. Despair was succeeded by calmness, and fear by confidence.

"Where is Melicent?" whispered Alethe, fully persuaded that he had been the cause of her disappearance.

The face of Bracegirdle became suffused with shame.

"You require of me," he said, in a subdued voice, "a humiliating confession. I see before me—he looked at Rainbold and Kava-

nagh—"two, against whom I have sinned deeply. Spare me the confusion of confession till I am stronger. I left Miss Rainbold in the hands of Tilac. If you hasten, you may be able to overtake them. Do not delay. Tell Hutton to advance with all speed."

While Barnabas was assisting Alethe to remount the elephant, she communicated the information she had received, and they set forward at a rapid rate, followed at a slower pace by Bracegirdle.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE LAND OF LIGHT AND THE LAND OF DARKNESS.

"Whoa! Stop, old boy! Can't you stop when you git agoin'? Whoa! Whoa!" It was thus that Barnabas addressed his elephant, after they had ridden some time with great swiftness. "What's this aside the road, I wonder?" he asked, looking at an object, sitting feebly upon the ground.

"A fellow-being," replied a weak voice.

"What's the matter of ye, feller-bein'?" demanded Barnabas.

"Sahib, I have been foully murdered!" responded the man on the ground, in a hollow tone.

"You're more fortinit than some," said Barnabas. "As a general thing, people as is murdered can't tell on't. Ain't hurt much, I spose, by bein' murdered?"

"Speak to him more kindly, Mr. Hutton," said Ida, gently.

"It's a cussed natyve!" muttered Barnabas.

"Sahib," returned the other, "I am of a dark skin, but I am none the less your fellow-mortal. I have not long to live, and therefore will not long detain you."

"Well, natyve, lay the matter afore us as soon as you can, and arterwards die at your leisure," said Hutton, impatiently.

"My name," resumed the native, "is Kassim."

"Sorry to see you so poorly, Kassim," quoth Barnabas.

"I shall be better soon," said Kassim. "Brahma will open his arms to me, and I shall be blest. Brahma is the beginning, Brahma is the end."

The voice of the speaker was low and solemn.

"It is God who is the beginning and the end," said Ida, compassionately.

"It matters not, lady, whether I call him God or Brahma, Buddha, Vishnu, or Shiva. The Creator is Ruler, by whatever name. I call him Brahma, and to Brahma I am going."

"I wish you a good journey," said Barnabas. "Let us not detain you. I mean no disrespect to you nor your religion, feller-bein', but our haste is urgent."

"Perchance, Sahib, you may make more speed by delay than by haste." He raised his eyes feebly. "I see one here," he went on, "who has lost a daughter."

"Native," cried Rainbold, springing from his horse, "tell me the fate of my daughter, and there is no request I will not grant you."

"What request should I have, Sahib? Am I not crossing the black water? Can you take me back, if I ask you? Can you open the river and let me pass through with dry feet? No, Sahib, no! Death comes once to every man, swarthy or white, high or low. And he has come to me. He has come to me like a thief; ay, like a vile and miserable Strangler!"

At that instant Bracegirdle came up. Kassim beheld him with a wondering stare of astonishment.

"Not dead, Sahib, not dead!" he murmured. "You should be dead, and I should be dead, too. But that I will shortly be. Look not at me, pale spectre!" He paused. "Listen to me, Sahibs. Look at my neck. There is a dark welt around it; it is a mark of the cord of the Thug. It is the fatal sign of the Strangler!"

Ida shuddered.

"Be calm, my dear Miss Macgregor, said Kavanagh.

"This," added Kassim, touching his neck, "is the gift of Tilac! Is the gift of Hydrabad! Is the gift of Hurdwar, the son of Meerab!"

"One and the same!" cried Alethe, awed and wonder-stricken. "Crafty dissembler! Arch-hypocrite! Infernal being!"

"These," Kassim went on, "are not his only names. He continually changes name

and character. In him dwells the dark spirit of evil. He has employed me often, and deceived me always." He looked at Bracegirdle. "After you were bitten, Sahib, by the cobra-capello he adroitly placed upon you, and turned backward with the dread of death within you, the fair English girl fled into the jungle. She hid, and Tilac found her not. I only knew the spot where she crouched, trembling. I saw the rank grass quiver, but I revealed it not. I wished not that the black wolf should tear her. The claws of Upas are far less cruel than his. The spirit of Satan that was in him urged him to new crime. He could not rest without sin. So he leaped upon me, noosed the cord around my neck, bore me down, and, standing with his feet on my shoulders, strangled me till I was apparently dead. Perhaps I was dead, and Brahma brought me to life to speak these words to you."

"Call him God!" said Ida, reverently.

"Fair English girl," he answered, with humility, "I will call him God, if it please you. Even God let it be! I revived, as you see. I crept from the bushes, and here you found me."

"And why may you not live?" asked Ida.

"English girl, I bleed inwardly. The scarlet stream of life is flowing into my lungs, which will soon be full. When it reaches my throat, I shall suffocate. I was called back but for a brief period; and I return without regret to the scenes from which I have been transiently recalled."

"But my daughter! my daughter!" cried the Major.

"Sahib, I wish I could restore her to your arms; but I have performed my mission, and can do no more."

His accents were now very weak, and there was a rattling in his throat.

"Beware," he added, speaking with difficulty, "of Tilac, Hydrabad, Hurdwar, the son of Meerab. He appears in all shapes—trust not a shape of them all. Europeans, you are warned! Avoid the cord, the dagger, the serpent, the claws of beast, and the poison of the man of drugs."

He stopped again, and seemed muttering prayers.

"I go," he faltered, in tones scarcely audible, "to the world of rewards and punishments; to the land of light and the land of darkness!"

Kassim's body swayed to and fro a moment, and then fell lifeless upon the soft foliage.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE DEVOTEE.

Major Rainbold gazed at the inanimate form of Kassim in doubt and wonder; but Barnabas Hutton, ever active and practical, sprang from his enormous beast, saying:

"Come, Major, come! Let us beat the jungle some at. We may find the poor gal, perhaps, hereabouts."

"Thank you, my boy, thank you!" said the Major, vacantly.

"My dear guardian," said Ida, anxiously, "do not take this so seriously to heart. I feel assured that Melicent will be restored to us unharmed."

"Bless you! bless you, my good girl! he answered, looking all the while at Alethe. "Bless you, my sweet child and daughter!"

"How kind he is!" murmured Alethe. "How gently he looks at us! This blow disturbs his mind."

"Kavanagh, my boy," said Barnabas, "stay here with the gals while we look round."

The faithful Hutton and the nearly paralyzed Major beat the jungle till morning; when, entirely assured that the object of their search was not in the vicinity, they resumed their way.

They had not traveled far, when they met an old man walking slowly, supporting his bent figure with a staff. His face was pale and wrinkled, his garments tattered and torn. He seemed lost in devout meditation. He scarcely raised his head to return the salutation of Barnabas.

"Let me question him," said Kavanagh. "We may make him useful. Old man, whence come you?"

"European, I neither came from home nor am I going home."

"That means," said Barnabas, "that he ha'n't got no home. And I shouldn't think he had; nor nobody to do his mendin', neither."

"I am one that walks up and down the

earth, in pursuit of that which I have never seen, and which no one has ever found," added the old man.

"It can't be dirt he's arter, for there's enough o' that onto him!" quoth Barnabas, humorously.

"I mean Truth," said he of the staff.

"Soap and water would do you more good," sneered Barnabas; for, in fact, the pilgrim was very filthy in his person.

"Holiness," resumed the old man, "regards not the body, but pertains solely to the mind."

"That's Hindu, clear through!" grumbled Barnabas. "But you needn't tell me that a dirty man was ever a good man; nor a dirty woman a good woman. Dirt and goodness won't mix, nohow. Come, Mr. Kavanagh, you don't git on much with this holy critter."

The old man glanced at Upas, and Upas lashed the elephant's back gently with her tail.

"We want a guide, pious pilgrim," said Kavanagh, "to some place of security; no matter how poor it may be; and the more remote from native settlements, the better. We are in extremity, and will reward you liberally for your friendly services."

"It is not my manner of life to meddle with the affairs of men. I seek but the purification of my soul," responded the pilgrim.

"Good actions," replied Kavanagh, "purify the soul."

"European, it may be so; but, usually, holy men cannot stop to perform them. Inform me how I may serve you with less trouble; for, let me tell you, that wandering santons and fakirs hate exertion above all things."

"You shall have your hands filled with rupees," interposed the Major, "if you will but lead us to a place of concealment."

"Rupees are good for both saint and sinner," said the old man, thoughtfully. "I know of an old idol temple, deep in the solitude of a jungle, that is little frequented, save now and then by priests and fakirs. Were it not so far, and were my limbs less weak, I would conduct you thither."

Rainbold took out his purse.

"Pay me after my work is done. He works best and most faithfully who works in anticipation of reward."

"E pluribus! The most sensiblest thing you've said, old truth-hunter! If you're the means o' doin' us any good, I'll show ye a bilin' spring, as a reward o' merit," observed Mr. Hutton.

"Decide quickly," said Kavanagh.

"I have decided," replied the fakir. "But my steps are slow, and my limbs feeble. Question me no further, and follow patiently. I will show you the temple."

The old man turned and struck into the jungle.

Although Barnabas addressed him several times, he returned no answer. Leaning on his staff, he walked on at an even but painfully slow pace, turning neither to the right nor left, nor once glanced over his shoulder.

When this silent progress had continued an hour, the fakir stopped at the summit of a small eminence, and, pointing with his staff, said: "Europeans, there is the temple."

"And here," said Rainbold, "are the rupees."

"You would deprive me," answered the devotee, "of the merit of a good action. You begrudge me the reward of a charity. I spit upon your rupees! I abhor your generosity, and I go my way, leaving the debt to be paid by the gods I serve."

The fakir walked from the spot with no other parting salutation, and while they looked after him, he disappeared among the vines and trees.

"That pious cuss has mighty queer ways," remarked Barnabas.

Upas growled; her eyes were fixed on the spot where the man had vanished.

"If filth is holiness, I shouldn't want to be no holier nor he is, at the present speakin'." He mused on that thought a moment.

"What's come over you, 'Lethe?" he asked, suddenly, observing a change in the girl's countenance.

"Nothing, Mr. Barnabas. I felt a slight chill; that was all. Did you notice how Upas' eyes followed the fakir?"

"I don't see the eyes of no Upas, when some others is round!" returned Mr. Barnabas, gallantly. "But there's the temple. Let us push ahead, and see what's into it."

This being a very reasonable proposal, they quickly approached the gray old temple

where, to their joy and surprise, they were received by a British officer.

CHAPTER XXVII HYDRABAD.

The happiness of the parties was very great, when informed by Colonel Argent that Melicent was there, safe and unharmed. One circumstance perplexed them not a little; after entering the temple, they looked around for Raynor Bracegirdle, and perceived that he was not with them. Hastening back to the steps, Barnabas saw him riding away; nor did he, truth to tell, regret his departure; while the others heartily rejoiced, not one being able to tolerate his presence. His going, though unexpected, was not the less a welcome event. It was the last that Major Rainbold saw of the son of his friend.

General gratitude and great good feeling prevailed. The ladies at the temple received this new acquisition to their numbers with unfeigned satisfaction. Barnabas, the Major, and Kavanagh added materially to the strength of the little garrison. The walls of the building being firm and thick, could resist any attack, almost, that could be made without artillery; while a few sharpshooters, stationed at windows, could pick off an enemy with great ease. Matters of this nature were discussed by the gentlemen, while the ladies listened to Ida's description of their flight, with lively interest.

Each retired to rest the ensuing night, with feelings of safety and gratitude that were the best solicitors of sleep.

Alethe was just sinking to repose, when a slight scratching at the door attracted her attention. She instantly remembered that Upas had been shut in one of the neglected apartments of the temple, and forgotten. She arose and admitted her. Her demonstrations of pleasure were such, that Alethe allowed her to remain.

Across one side of the room that had been assigned her, there were several niches, or small recesses, before which hung curtains of sombre stuff, pictured with uncouth images. The niches had probably been used for some of the services of idolatry. Alethe was glad to see Upas, after she had testified her joy at the meeting, retire into one of these and lie down. She felt safer for having this dumb companionship; for the place, to her, was unpleasantly lonely. The associations were not of a pleasing kind. What dark rites might not have been performed in that room? It was unnaturally chilly, she thought, and there was a supernatural awe about it.

She sank upon the simple couch that had been provided for her, without disrobing, and gazed at the pale light of her small lamp a long time. Finding that she could not sleep, she arose to open a door connecting it with Melicent's and Ida's apartment. She had remained beside them till they had both passed into gentle slumbers, and then crept to her own couch in the room we have mentioned. On trying the door, to her surprise she found it fastened; nor would it yield to her endeavors to open it. This struck her as being exceedingly singular; for she had opened and closed it several times that night without any difficulty.

She next tried the door communicating with the halls and passages, and finding it as she had left it, returned to her bed. An hour, perhaps, passed, and her eyes were growing heavy, when she heard a sliding, rolling movement in the wall, and looking curiously toward the recesses, saw one of the curtains move. She watched it for a moment, and it became still, but presently vibrated more than before, then was pushed aside, and a figure appeared. It was the old devotee who had guided them to the temple. He wore the same tattered garments, and leaned upon his staff as he stood glancing around him.

Alethe was terrified. A secret dread of the old man had been upon her when they met before, and now that dread was a hundred fold increased. She lay silent, almost breathless on the couch.

The fakir slowly turned toward her.

"Arise," he said, in an authoritative tone, "and come with me!"

Alethe did not stir; she could not. Her person was paralyzed with fear.

"Hearest thou not?" he added, with severity. "Hast thou not the blood of our people in thy veins? Wilt thou go after strange gods?"

Alethe's wonder grew greater, and the man before her more terrific.

"To thy feet, degenerate daughter and follow me!"

The girl began to gain strength, if not courage. She answered:

"Go hence, old man, or I will call those who will speedily expel you!"

"You can call no one. Should you now try the doors, you will find them both immovable as the walls."

"Treachery! treachery!" cried Alethe, starting up.

"Call not! No one can take you from me. I have come for you, and you shall go."

His manner was now threatening, his voice harsh. He advanced.

"Who are you?" cried Alethe, retreating.

"Look at me, and see! Do not these rags witness for me? Am I not one that wanders for the purification of his spirit?"

He lifted his eyes full upon hers, and his darting eyeballs swam in great orbs of white.

"No, you are not that!" answered Alethe, shrinking and edging slowly toward the nearest recess. She heard a little growl, but the old man did not hear it.

"If I am not what I have said, who am I?" he asked with a sneer and a laugh.

"You are Hurdwar! You are Hydrabad! You are Tilac, the son of Meerab!" exclaimed Alethe. She retreated still further. Her fixed and stony face was whiter than a European's.

"I am more than this," he answered, coldly, and with a sardonic smile. "I am Satan! I am the incarnate spirit of evil. Yours are the only eyes in India that could have detected me."

He glared at her like a savage beast.

"You are all that you have named; and more, if that may be. But I have seen your changes these many years. From childhood you have crossed my path. You have appeared first in one shape, then in another; but in all forms you have been malignant," answered Alethe, her cheeks beginning to flush, and her voice to gather energy.

"What you have said, girl, is but truth. But I came not to talk truth. Come! we part not now. We go hence together. You will become mine; you will partake of my spirit; you will become partner in my nature. You, too, will become the habitation of evil. Satan will live in me, and in thee. The malevolence within me is becoming too great for one body; there must be two. You are that other, consecrate to evil forevermore!"

He threw off his rags like lightning, passed his hands over his face, cast off his white locks, and stood before her—Hydrabad! The great carbuncle flamed at his throat, and the little lamp and every object in the room was reflected in the moonstone in the handle of his dagger. His lips parted; he rubbed the stain of the betel-juice from his teeth and showed them white and ravenous. He did not laugh, but his smile was pitiless as ice.

"I thank you, Hydrabad, that you appear to me thus. Open truth is better than concealed hypocrisy. A horror known is better than a horror suspected. A fear realized is better than a fear feared. The extremity of my peril drives me to strength. I rebound from my weakness. I scorn, I defy, I unspeakably loathe you!"

She raised her arm—she menaced him with her finger.

"Satan," she added, "will never be divided between us. Evil will never dwell conjointly in you and me. Tremble, Hydrabad, for your hour has come!"

There was a solemn pause. The dark features of Hydrabad grew darker. His figure swelled and erected itself with disdainful pride, till he indeed seemed Satan, robbed of his awful majesty and dire effulgence.

"Foolish child!" he retorted, with lofty scorn. "I admire your spirit of steel and the burning fervor of your anger; but with Hydrabad you cannot contend. Slay this body, and I should come again in another. I am not a man, but a principle."

For the first time since she had known him, Hydrabad laughed aloud; and his laughter fell upon her ears like a fiendish shout of triumph.

She doubted Upas; she doubted herself.

"Your presumption goes too far," she said, concealing her misgivings. "The cunning are taken in their own craftiness. They are taken in the snare they have laid for another."

Hydrabad, I said truly, your hour has come!" He now stared at her in real wonder.

"Upas! Upas!"

The curtain stirred.

"Upas! Upas!"

The tigress sprang out in a flaming fury.

Hydrabad's swarthy visage grew sallow.

"Kill him! kill him!" cried Alethe, raising both her arms, and pointing and looking at Hydrabad.

The light and graceful body of Upas quivered an instant, then it launched upon Hydrabad. There was a momentary conflict. Alethe heard groans and curses. Both man and beast glanced on her sight like shadows.

There was a sliding sound in the wall; and the girl, raising her shuddering eyes, beheld only Upas. But there were pools of blood on the floor, fragments of garments, a dagger with a moonstone in the handle, and near one of the recesses, a silken cord and the carbuncle that had flamed at Hydrabad's throat.

Upas crouched at the feet of her mistress. She looked up at her for approval, with her red tongue out, and the heat and glow of the encounter upon her.

Alethe fell upon her knees, cast her arms around the neck of Upas, and wept upon her glossy head.

CHAPTER XXVIII. THE ADJUSTMENT.

Barnabas Hutton, notwithstanding the fatigues of the day, found it impossible to remain quietly within, and so went noiselessly from the temple, after its inmates had sought repose. He was somewhat surprised to find Major Rainbold standing silently beneath the portals of the main entrance.

"Thought you was in bed an hour ago," said Barnabas. "What worries you, Major?"

"Nothing worries me, Barnabas, but I'm too nervous to sleep. The shock of the past night has unsettled me. Why are you stirring, my friend?"

"Kinder restless, Major, like yourself. Want to look arter Methuselah, too. Besides, it's a good thing in times like these to be spyin' about consider'ble," replied Hutton.

"Very true," said Rainbold. "We can't be too much on the alert."

"E pluribus!" said Barnabas, rather abstractedly. "That 'Lethe's rather pretty gal, I think, Major," he added after a pause.

"I think she is quite pretty, Barnabas," responded the Major.

"Where did you pick up that gal, Major?"

There was something on Hutton's mind, obviously.

"A foundling, demme!" said Rainbold, curtly.

"Wish I'd found her," replied Barnabas. "It must be a deal o' trouble to take care of a foundlin'?"

"It is," returned the Major, fidgeting.

"Thought so! Goin' to take her off your hands. I am, by pluribus!" Barnabas looked up at the moon, then down at the earth, and finally at Rainbold.

"What do you mean by that, Sir?" cried the latter. "I'm not going to have girls taken off my hands, demme! I want all the girls I've got, and more too, Sir."

"Lethe and I have kinder talked it over, and though we didn't say nothin' about house-keepin', I thought we sort of understood each other. I did. Yes!"

"Understood each other—did you, Sir?"

The Major was quite fierce.

"Well, that was the way I looked at it. The pretty little critter didn't say much but, 'Yes Mister Barnabas,' but her voice was sweeter nor the squeak of a flute. Bless my body, if I ever heard sich a voice! I felt as if I was swimmin' in a ocean o' maple molasses, with about a dozen brass bands playin' Hail Columby all to onct. Dear me! I don't know what's into her she makes a man so wounded fond of her. She's do-cile, but she's got the sperrit of Upas, when she's stirred up. As for beauty, the pure white don't begin with her! Cream and molasses is durned sight nicer color nor clear cream. Jest drop a drop o' sweetenin' into the cream, and it gives it a soft mellow shade, Major."

Rainbold was now very attentive, and though he changed his position often, lost not a word that fell from Hutton's lips.

"Speakin' o' the cream," continued Barnabas, "don't know where it come from, nor I don't care. I'll marry her, if she'll have me. I will, by pluribus!"

"Well, well! This is very queer!" muttered the Major. "I think you're in earnest, demme! You're a very fine fellow, Barnabas. And, Barnabas, don't you mind about the white blood; it's as good as yours, any day. I know about that blood, Sir, and her mother's blood, Sir, too. I love the girl as if she was my own daughter."

"I guess I can do better nor that by her, Major," said Barnabas, quietly.

"You're a scoundrel, Sir!" roared the Major. "Alethe's my girl, Sir! My own girl, Sir! I'm her father, Sir! Her own father, demme!"

"She isn't to blame for that," answered Barnabas, coolly.

"She might have had a worse father, Barnabas?" He looked at Hutton significantly.

"I don't know about that. I can tell you better when you've said something."

Barnabas turned upon him archly.

"You're a knave and a villain, and therefore"—he took both Barnabas' hands—"therefore, my dear boy, take her. But keep my secret. There's Melicent, you know? I don't think Melicent knows. But there's Ida! I think Ida has watched me rather too much. Demme, Sir, Ida does know? I've seen it in her confounded black eyes a dozen times; and my own foolish face has as good as confessed it on the spot."

"You've convinced me that the gal might had a worse father," responded Barnabas, with honest emotion. "I've known ever since I see ye, that you's a downright, sensible, hearty, whole-souled, grumblin', impulsive, middle-aged gentleman! You be. Yes! But as for your great secret, I don't think it's so much of a secret as you think 'tis. Lord, Major! I spelled it out the first day; and Melicent has spelled it out, and Idy has spelled it out. They've spelled it out, though they mayn't never have pronounced it. I reckon you won't have to speak on't, Major. You may write it down as a understood thing. Lord bless ye, Melicent never made a servant of the gal! You might seen that, if you d had other folk's eyes. She made a pet on her, and that was all. She used to set, day arter day, on a cushion at her feet, just to be kissed and fondled, and have her dark hair played with. There's a bond atween 'em, that they both love, and that can't be broke. Hear 'Lethe call her mistress' onet, and see if 'tisn't perfect music? And look at Miss Melicent's eyes when she's called 'mistress', and see if there isn't some'at arch and knowin' in 'em? I've seen the gal smile in your face, acause you thought she didn't see right into ye. Terrible 'cute, gals be!"

"And Alethe?" asked the Major, softly, laying his hand on Hutton's arm.

"Them tell-tale eyes o' your'n let it out years ago. Lord love ye, Major, the gal adores ye. I wish she adored me, I vow!"

Barnabas sighed gently.

"The little witch says Mr. Barnabas rather too soft! Eh, Mr. Hutton?" The Major pushed the hilt of his sword against Barnabas' ribs.

"Yes, Mr. Barnabas!" mimicked the Major. "Ha, ha! How's that sound, eh?"

"Sounds like thunder 'longside o' hern!" replied Barnabas.

"The nonsense of a man in love," said the Major, good-naturedly, much better pleased with Barnabas than ever before. Indeed, the simple good sense of the man quite captivated the heart of the impetuous Rainbold. So they walked arm in arm around the temple, conversing in a very friendly and confidential manner. While thus engaged, the uneasiness of Methuselah drew the notice of his master, who immediately began talking to him in his own peculiar way. All his elephant-talk did not quiet the animal, however.

"There's some'at round that he don't like," said Hutton. "I'll slip his chain and let him go."

Suiting the action to the word, Methuselah set off with great earnestness through the jungle, making a notable crashing among the

bamboos. He came back in a few minutes, bringing a man in his trunk.

"That's the kind o' trunk to have," quoth Barnabas. "A trunk as you can pack a man in. A reg'lar travelin' trunk, that is. What you got there, old boy? Picked up a Hindu, haven't ye? Bring him along, Sir! This way, Sir, this way!"

The elephant brought his burden very deliberately to Hutton. It was an old man, with a long beard and sallow countenance, whom Barnabas at once recognized as Meerab.

"E pluribus!" he exclaimed. "Here's the great moonshe himself! Here's the anecdote man; the man of roots and yerbs, and p'isons. I reckon there ain't no elixirs that can git him out o' that ere grip without my help. I'm the anecdote you want now, old gentleman."

"Who has he got here, Barnabas? What is this?"

"This," replied Hutton, coolly, "is that interestin' old gentleman that 'Lethe took me to see the night we got that little crooked vial of powerful doctor-stuff. Powerful! It was the powerfulest I ever see of any kind o' p'ison. I s'pose 'twas p'ison. I s'pose p'ison has to offset p'ison; leastways our old family practitioner used to say so; and what he didn't know wasn't scarcely worth studyin'."

Then to Methuselah:

"Set him down, animile, set him down! Should think you's old enough to know how much squeezin' a critter can bear. Don't you see he's blue-black in the face, and that his arms and legs stick out at right angulars, e'enamost? Dear me! what a weak-minded old elephant."

Methuselah rather reluctantly placed Meerab on his feet, which, from some cause, at that moment were of no particular use to him; for he fell down without an effort on the part of his muscles to keep him up. Mr. Hutton observed this without much surprise.

"I've allers noticed," he added, "that when Methuselah gives a critter a grip round the waist, it takes the stiffenin' out of him. It does. Yes!"

Meerab gasped and quivered on the ground.

Methuselah piped and trumpeted in a manner that even startled the Major, at the same time making a peculiar churning motion with his fore feet, lifting one, then the other.

"He allers does it," explained Barnabas, "when his toes itch to tread on somebody. It's his instincts, Major, and nothin' but them."

You see he knows the depravity of his master's natur, and elephants and sarvents allers want to fall into the depravity of your natur, Major. He knows I'd like to put a bullet thorough that villain, as well as if he's gifted with human understandin'. See him cast his eyes at me! Don't you observe the mischief in 'em? They say, 'Say the word, Barnabas, and I'll make pumice of him in about the quickest!' What think, Major?"

"Don't extinguish him just yet, Barnabas. Let us take him in; we may learn something from him, perhaps."

"You'll learn nothin' from me," said Meerab, gasping for breath.

"Don't be too sure o' that! Jump up and come along."

Meerab, not being able to jump up and come along, Barnabas seized him by the shoulder, and set him upon his feet, and supported, or rather dragged him into the temple.

They had no sooner entered the hall, than Alethe came running to them, in great disorder, followed closely by Upas.

Hutton relinquished his grasp upon Meerab, and ran forward to meet her.

"What's the matter, little 'un? What's the matter? Some'at has happened."

"Yes, Mr. Barnabas," answered Alethe, averting her eyes.

"Speak, my dear, dear girl!" cried the Major, taking her in his arms and kissing her.

Barnabas turned away, wiped something wet from his cheeks, and pushed Meerab energetically forward.

Alethe nestled to the Major; her small hands held him fast; she sobbed on his breast. For the first time, she felt fully acknowledged and fully loved. He whispered something in her ear that made her dreamy eyes flash with ineffable delight.

"Say what you want to! Say what you want to!" articulated Barnabas, coughing and choking. "I ain't

a seboy nor a Hindu, by no means. I ain't. No. It's all right, ain't it, 'Lethe?"

"Yes, Mr. Barnabas!" sighed Alethe.

"It's all right with you—with the Major, and I, too, Brownie. It is. Yes! He knows, and I know, and you know; and I s'pose we all know. Don't let us talk. There's no use in talkin', you know. When you know a thing, you know it; and there's no need o' makin' a fuss about it. He's willin', and you're willin', and I'm willin'; and we're all willin'." Barnabas stopped and glared at Meerab.

"Don't be lookin' grim at me, old man!"

"I know who she is!" sneered Meerab. "I saw her when she was a child. And my son Hurdwar knows. Yes, Hurdwar knows her." He glanced at Alethe, then at Upas. He saw red stains on her striped and shining coat. He panted and shook with alarm.

"Meerab," said Alethe, "you do well to tremble. My power has proved greater than his. Upas remembered me; she acknowledged my influence; she confessed the hand that first nourished her. I dwelt near your hut, old man, when Hurdwar came in with this creature. Filled with compassion, I had regard to her helplessness, and warmed her into life. Hurdwar unmasked his evil nature, I menaced him with his wrath"—she pointed to Rainbold—"and he fled; to appear again in process of time under other names and in other characters. I have foiled him in all. He has been a deadly poison; I have been his counter-poison. Old man, execrable creature, I stand here to-night, safe and unharmed; but your son Hydrabad is torn and rent by Upas. He lies, bleeding and dying, in one of the dark and secret recesses of this temple."

"It is false!" cried the old man, greatly excited.

"Show us the way, my girl," said the Major. "Let us sift this mystery thoroughly."

Alethe obeyed this bidding. With the lamp she had brought, she turned and led them to the room where she had been visited by Hydrabad.

Barnabas dragged Meerab after her. She showed them the recess through which Hydrabad had come and gone, and related what had happened.

Hutton tried in vain to solve the mystery of his entrance.

"Open it, open it, old man!" he said, addressing Meerab. "You belong to the wicked brotherhood, and know the secret."

Hutton produced a pistol. Meerab paused, scowled at Barnabas with fiendish malice, then most reluctantly pressed his foot upon a spring, and a passage, narrow and low, was immediately disclosed.

Barnabas took the lamp from Alethe, and pushing Meerab before him, entered. Rainbold, Alethe, and Upas followed. After going a short distance in a stooping posture, they came to a spacious apartment, dimly lighted. A little track of blood led them on. They approached an altar of curious shape, from the foot of which arose a ghastly figure. It was Hydrabad. He was smeared with blood, his garments rent into shreds, and his face deadly pale.

"You think you triumph!" he cried, in a voice husky with weakness. "But you do not, can not triumph. No one can conquer Hydrabad." His eyes fell on Upas. "Ungrateful creature!" he muttered, "you have destroyed this body—this strong palace of my soul. But I will find another. I will yet inhabit another temple."

"Hurdwar! Hurdwar!" cried Meerab, in a voice of emotion.

"Away, old man, away! I am not your son, but the son of evil, the Child of the Cord, the Slave of the Silent Death. Let me die as I have lived—hating and hated." He paused, and grasping the altar for support, gazed a moment at Alethe.

"Fatal, fatal lure!" he murmured. "In stooping to thee, I lost my power. Thou art beautiful as the stars, but ever my fixed and deadly opposite. The element of Fire claims its own. I surrender the vital spark of my body to the eternal Orb, Father of Light and Heat."

Hydrabad's body swayed to and fro. He clutched the sacrificial stones more feebly. He closed his eyes, his dark life went out, and he sank at the foot of the altar.

"He is gone! he is gone! My son is gone!" cried Meerab. "I will follow my son. I will hasten after my son!"

He drew forth a vial, similar in shape to that he had given Alethe, poured its contents into his mouth, and shivered the vial upon the stone floor.

"Fire of the universe! I go back to thee!" he exclaimed, and fell dead upon the body of Hydrabad.

"Come away! come away!" said Alethe, in a whisper. "Tarry not here."

Taking her by the hand, Barnabas led her from the altar-room of the temple of idols. They never entered it again. The bones of Hydrabad and Meerab bleached where they had fallen. Whether the former ever appeared again in another body, the materials upon which this tale is founded make no mention; but they do affirm that Alethe and Barnabas lived very happily together.

The principal characters of our story remained several months in security in the retreat which they had fortunately found; at the expiration of which, the subjugation of the revolted Sepoys by the English troops freed them alike from danger and the necessity of concealment.

Major Rainbold still resides in India. Neal Kavanagh and Ida are the possessors of one of the most valuable and romantic situations in the country. Kavanagh holds a most lucrative office under the home government.

Colonel Argent made matrimonial overtures to Melicent; and as he married one of the handsomest Englishwomen in India, we are sure he was accepted.

Barnabas Hutton still rides Methuselah, and has more faith than ever in the little girl Alethe.

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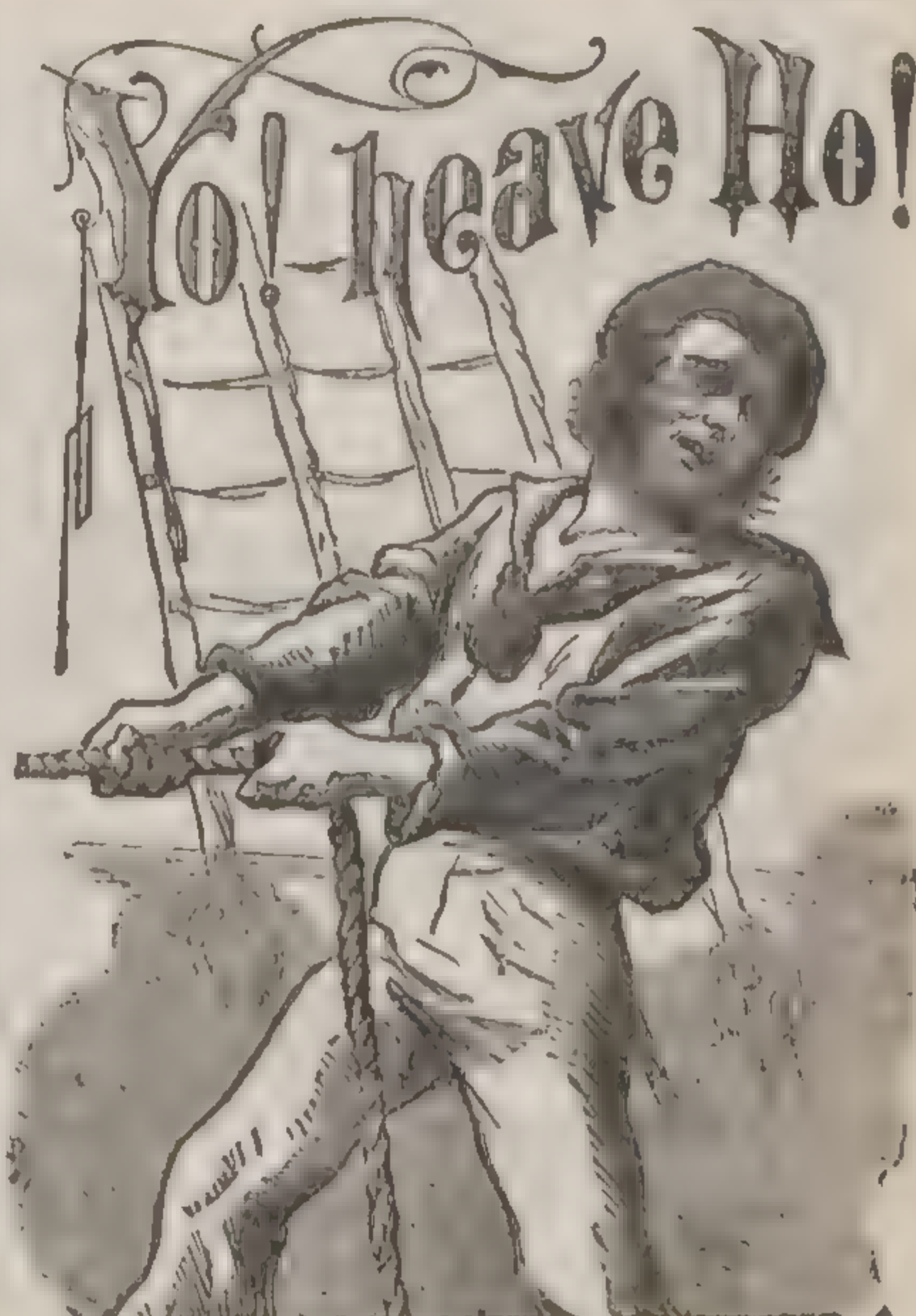
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